

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

ウォルテニア 戦記

IX

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RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

— Wortenia Senki —

**- VOLUME 4 -
Zalda Kingdom War
(III)**


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[Hasutsuki]

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「それで? どうだった」
天幕に入ると否や、亮真は
目の前で片膝を付いて待っていた
咲夜へと声を掛ける。

「始める」

前衛の二人が互いに顔を見合わせ小さく頷く。
そして、無言のまま突っ込んでくる。

(いっしょ……一体?)

(少し揺さぶってみるか……)

An anime-style illustration featuring two young women in detailed, dark grey armor. The woman on the right has long, flowing white hair and blue eyes, looking upwards with a slight smile. The woman on the left has long, flowing blonde hair and green eyes, looking upwards with a more serious expression. They are both wearing armor with red accents. The background is a dark, textured surface with red, petal-like particles floating around them. The overall mood is dramatic and intense.

「お姉様。こちらは？」

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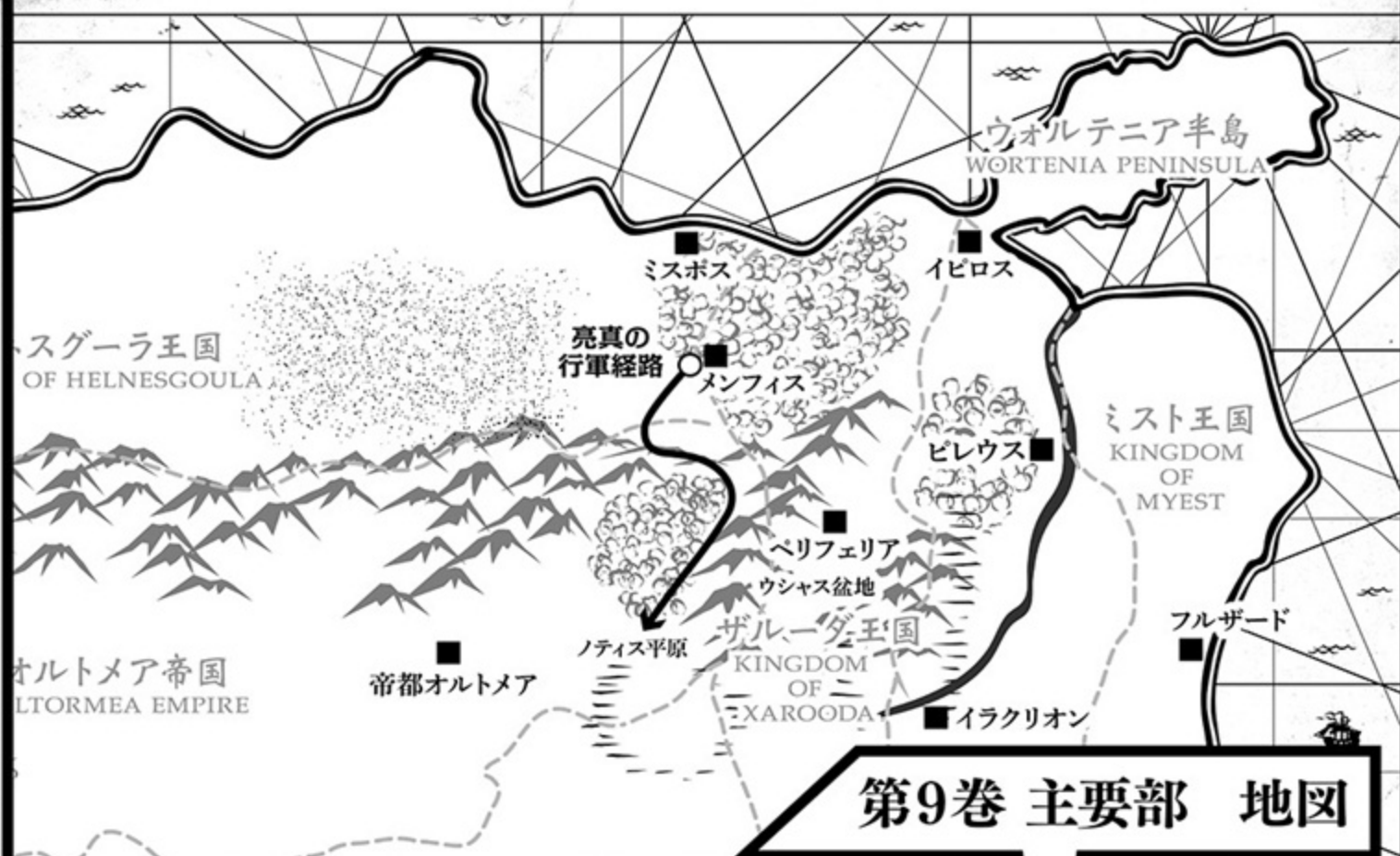


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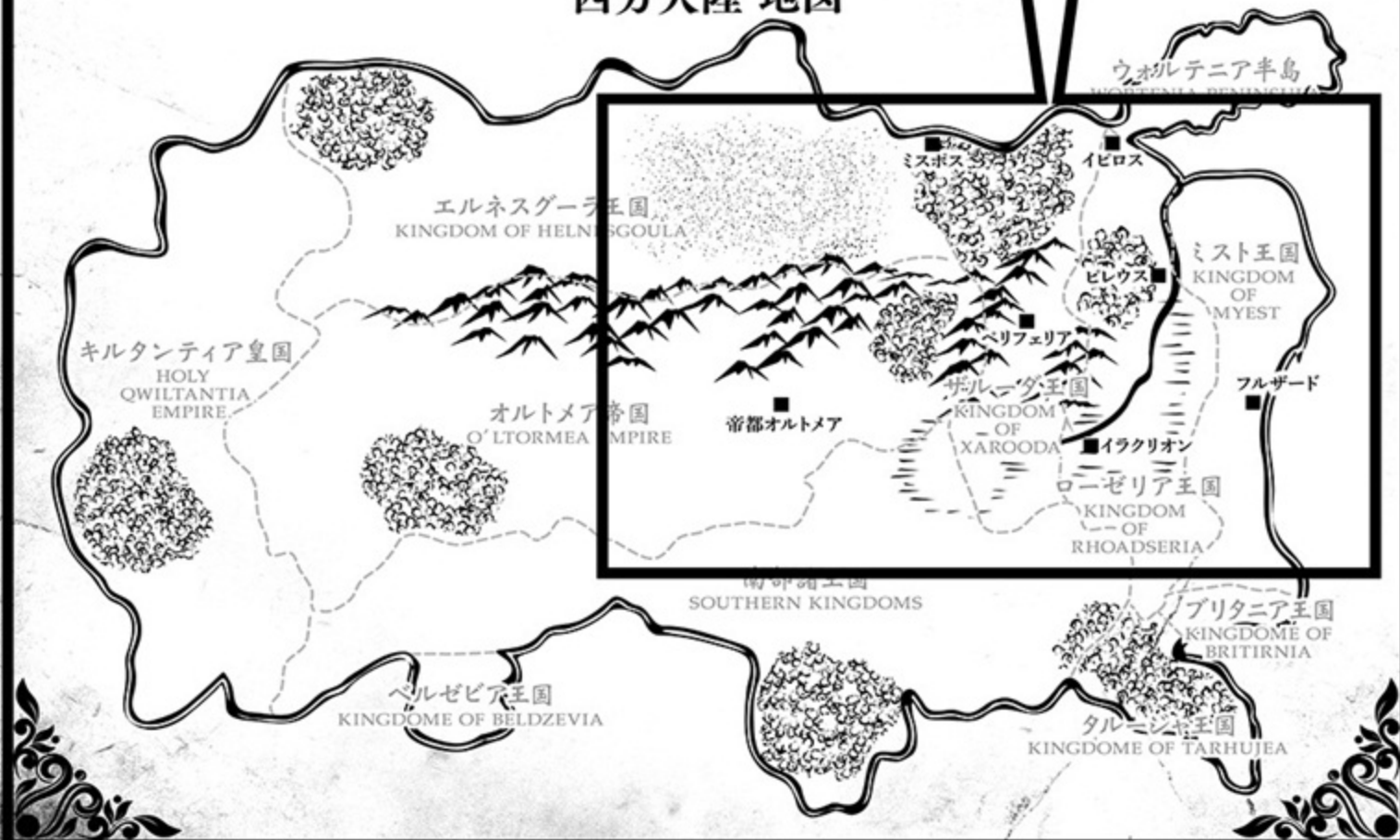
保利亮太



WORLD MAP of 《RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR》



西方大陸 地図



Chapter 30

Harvest Time 1

There was always a cause-and-effect in all things in nature.

Whether it was the science-ruled Earth, or the mystery and miracle-filled another world, that rule alone stays the same.

There was always a cause and a consequence.

(What will happen, what is the consequence of this event...)

Sudou and Sardina, the two of them were contemplating the same thing.

And Seria desperately tried to understand the situation while looking at Sardina who has her face down.

(I'm here as a military strategist. Think... What do I know, what should I see in this situation... All started the moment when that messenger arrived...)

Seria could still remember every single conversations after the surprise attack.

And finally, Seria noticed something.

(Wait... What did the messenger say? Part of our army sortied out?)

Then she remembered what Sudou said after that.

(Sudou said we might suffer fatal injury if we continue to act recklessly... reckless? In other words, their sortie was not part of her highness' expectations... Those troops came out from the camp, in other words, if the surprise attack was actually a decoy then... the unit that sortied out will...)

After she thought further ahead, all the pieces started to come together.

(Depending on our troops' movements after this, it will decide the trend of the war... And the real intention of letting Rolf-dono and Saitou calm the troops...)

After that, Seria's thoughts come to a conclusion.

“The surprise attack is a decoy... Then what awaits for the lured unit is...”

When Seria said those words, Sardina raised her face and look at her with a sharp look. Eyes filled with rage and sorrow.

It showed that the conclusion that Seria had reached was the correct one.

Sardina and Seria stared at each other in silence.

Other than that, Sudou had an unchanging smile on his face.

After a while, the heavy silence was broken by a knight who runs into the tent.

He was coming into the tent hastily.

He kneeled before Sardina immediately while trying to fix his rough breath.

“Report! Saitou-sama and Rolf-sama have successfully calmed the army.”

Seria unintentionally stroked her chest after she heard the report.

It can be said that having Rolf who was originally tasked to defend the rear come to the front line was a fortunate thing.

At first, Sardina just wants more manpower before she launched the all-out battle, but it has unexpectedly brought good luck.

It would've been impossible to calm the soldiers unless the words came out from a man with a proven track record like Rolf.

Saitou was not bad either, but he won't be able to calm the current situation alone.

Seria smiled in relief.

However, Sardina's wary expression have not yet disappeared.

“How many soldiers went out without permission?”

“We've confirmed the soldiers who sortied numbered around eight thousands, the soldiers mostly belong to the 3rd, 5th, and 8th chivalric orders that were part of the western region army.”

Hearing that, Sardina clicked her tongue.

If Zalda's intention was to lure Ortomea's troops, then their chance of coming back was low.

(Eight thousands... It's more than I had expected... And as I had feared, it was the troops from the western area we had asked as reinforcements... My command seems to not have spread properly...)

Most of the reinforcement soldiers had gone out without Sardina's permission.

That was one of the Empire's downside for having a large territory.

Even though they had come from the same Imperial Army, for those who were not familiar with her command, it was particularly hard to enforce an order.

Thus Sardina herself could not utilize them efficiently.

“Rolf-sama also asked permission to sent a rescue unit...”

Sardina didn't reply the messenger...

If they do nothing, eight thousands men might well die.

However, knowing that there was a trap, Sardina could not order the rest of the army to jump into it either...

“We have no choice but to cut our losses, huh...?”

Sudou opened his mouth while looking at Sardina who kept silent.

His voice felt irritating.

Despite the current situation, Sudou's manner of speaking didn't even change.

“Cut our losses, you said?”

Seria looked puzzled, unable to understand such term.

“Yes, cut one's losses. If we tried to help and save those soldiers poorly, we might suffer a bigger disaster instead...”

Cut one's losses

In term of business, it was a move where one abandons an enterprise or course of action that was clearly going to be unprofitable or unsuccessful before one suffers too much losses or harm.

Following that thought, what did Sudou meant by saying “cut our losses”?

The answer was...

“We should not send a rescue unit, you want us to abandon them, is that right?”

Seria held her breath when Sardina said those words while glaring at Sudou full of hatred.

“Of course, if your highness wanted to... This Sudou will not say anything more and dispatch a rescue unit... However, although it might be rude of me, I want to say that if we sent a rescue unit now, the chance of success for the invasion would be drastically reduced. Furthermore, It is already too late, if we go now, instead of a rescue we will be met with a crushing defeat...”

Sudou laughed lightly...

It was written on his face.

That he wants Sardina to decide...

“You already know that much yet still want me to decide huh?”

(Sudou Akitake... He was the right-hand man of Gaies who had already passed away...)

Although his personality can be said as nothing but disgusting, when it comes to his ability, Sardina could not say anything.

In fact, Sudou merely stated the truth.

And like the old people said, sometimes the truth can be painful...

“Of course... If we let our subordinates got killed in front of us like that, the morale of the whole army will fall. That is why, no matter which path your highness choose, we will sustain heavy damage. If that is the case then, I suggest we take the choice with less damage...”

“Should we maintain morale, or should we choose to preserve the soldiers' numbers, is that it?”

Sardina then chewed her thumb's fingernail.

(If we don't send a rescue unit, the soldiers will be dissatisfied with my command... Creating the possibility of them deserting the army... But if we sent a rescue team while fully knowing that it was a trap, we might suffer heavier losses instead...)

Either choice was a major problem for Ortomea Empire army, one wrong move here might cause the invasion to become a complete failure.

It was a very difficult choice.

And the right answer might not exist when it comes to these two choices.

It was two disadvantageous options.

And just like Sudou had said.

Sardina needs to make a decision.

That was the responsibility of someone who leads an army.

“Very well then...”

After a long silence, Sardina finally opened her mouth.

But the choice she made never reached anyone ears.

“Urgent! Please let me have an audience with her imperial princess Sardina-sama.”

Because her voice was overlapped by the voice of another messenger who entered her tent in a hurry...



It was already dark outside the window; in her private room located in the corner of the fort, Elena sat on the chair while drinking.

Strong alcohol slides down her throat.

Elena didn't like drinking too much, but on the battlefield, occasionally some people want to drink alcohol so badly to relieve stress.

Especially right after a battle.

During those times, the image of dead bodies across the battlefield would usually appear inside one's mind.

However, what was inside Elena's mind right now was the appearance of a single woman.

A young lady with luxurious armor.

Her white-skinned face looked very smooth.

That's right, the figure that appeared inside Elena's mind was the beloved daughter of the Ortomea Empire's Emperor, Sardina.

“Fuuh... I thought she would choose to bring a rescue unit, but unexpectedly she was calmer than I thought she would be... I wonder if I underestimated her too much?”

Looking at the sighing Eclatia, Elena poured some alcohol into Eclatia's cup.

“In my eyes, she has made a splendid decision. Because they should vaguely realize that the previous move was a trap. I guess, as a military commander, her judgment was right, but...”

Eclatia smiled in a grand manner.

As a matter of fact, they both didn't care whether or not Sardina sent a rescue unit.

Since, no matter which choice Sardina made, she was bound to lose something...

"I guess so..."

"Now, the question is whether she would be able to regain her soldiers' trust or not..."

For soldiers, what was most important were their own lives.

And sometimes the commander best choice was not always the best one for the soldiers.

Because Sardina didn't send a rescue, strong distrust would start to appear among the Ortomea Empire soldiers.

Out of uneasiness, those soldiers might start to think that they were just disposable goods.

"Well, for her being that young, it would be impossible. Even though she has war experience, all of it comes from using the overwhelming military power of the Ortomea Empire. No matter how much talent she has, she lacked the experience to tilt the situation back to the Ortomea side..."

Inside the room, warriors born from the weak smiled.

Indeed, no matter how much talent she had, for Elena and Eclatia, Sardina was a little bird lacking the experience of being weak.

Sardina had too little knowledge when it comes to waging a war with disadvantageous situations.

She was especially lacking the resourcefulness of someone who survived a desperate warfare.

"I guess it all depends on her adjutants now?"

"I guess so... We can't let our guard down now..."

Elena nodded in agreement.

They both generally understood Sardina's situation.

What they needed to do now was to understand the men who assisted her.

“Well, even if we think about that now, we won't be able to reach a conclusion... For now, let us rejoice at the small victory we just had...”

Saying that Elena raised her cup.

“Agreed, Grahart-san also did a great job, more than I had expected. In today's battle alone, we managed to cut off more than 5000 enemy soldiers...”

After Eclatia successfully lured out the Ortomea Empire, Grahart performed another surprise attack on the soldiers who were chasing Eclatia, causing a massive damage.

It was two surprise raids.

The plan itself can be regarded as successful, but on the corner of her mind, Eclatia felt unsatisfied by the result.

“Although the result was a bit unsatisfying for something that took a lot of time to prepare, I guess it can't be helped... I should be satisfied with this for now...”

Elena showed a bitter smile after hearing her remark.

They had sacrificed a lot of time in preparing the previous strategy.

Since they arrived as reinforcements, Elena and Eclatia had done nothing but defensive warfare.

Comparing the result with the time spent and the troubles they went through in preparing the previous surprise strategy, it was indeed disappointing.

“Well let's forget about it for now... We've managed to perform our role, and besides, the result wouldn't decide the fate of the war either.”

“That's right... But with this, we have no trump card left, since we also already used the bow cavalry in today's attack. After this, we have no choice but dedicate ourselves fully to defensive warfare...”

They both shrugged at each other.

However, they both didn't show any anxiety in their expressions.

In fact, the two of them only smiled at each others.

They laughed as if they didn't have any concerns at all.

That was because the two of them believed in the man who was currently in a distant land within Ortomea Empire territory...

Then suddenly the door of Elena's private room was knocked.

By the hand of the goddess of destiny...

“Emergency! Ortomea Empire’s army is showing some weird movements!”

A knight high-pitched voice could be heard from outside the room.

Hearing the knight report, Elena and Eclatia nodded at each other.

“It seems the time has come... Eclatia.”

“That seems to be the case...”

They didn't continue into details.

During the day, Ortomea Empire didn't only lose soldier lives, but also some of its morale.

Under such circumstances, it was unlikely for Ortomea Empire to perform a night battle.

With that being the case, only one possibility was left.

It was something Elena and Eclatia had believed in.

Had they not, Eclatia and Elena wouldn't just stay and perform defensive battle in Ushias basin all this time.

However, as a human being, they did have some uneasiness inside their hearts that they refused to let it show.

“So, you made it in time... Mikoshiba Ryouma...”

Along with admiration, Elena speaks out a man's name.

The war between the Zalda Kingdom and the Ortomea Empire had spanned for one year and a few months, starting with the Notiz plain battle.

It finally came to an end.

By the scheme of a one man...

Chapter 31

Harvest Time 2

All started a few days before the time the Ortomea army led by Sardina, withdrew in a hurry.

A huge fort standing tall above flat ground.

It was a stone-made fortress, something that wouldn't fall from a half-baked attack.

Inside the fortress, several thousands soldiers were stationed.

And within the warehouses of the fortress, abundant foods and weapons collected from various locations in Ortomea Empire were being stored.

If one was to choose to attack the fortress from the front, one needed to prepare tens of thousands of soldiers, siege weapons and be ready to spend months of time.

“That is Notiz fort, huh? Certainly, such a great fortress...”



While being swayed by the horse's back, the man lifted his helmet's face cover and gazed at the fortress.

This fort that had been built on the western end of Notiz plain and had since continued to exist as a defense base against the Zalda Kingdom.

For Ortomea Empire, the Notiz fort was similar to that of Ushias fort for the Zalda Kingdom.

“Indeed, certainly that is magnificent...”

A beautiful voice comes out from someone who followed the man.

Her chest presented a rich curve.

One can't see her face because she didn't lift her helmet's face cover like the man did, but spilling out from the gap of the helmet, one could see silky shiny silver hair swayed by the wind.

The man shrugged his shoulders when he heard the lady's words.

“Well, because of that we have prepared extensively... If we fail here, then we won't be able to show our face...”

It might be difficult to bring down Notiz fort by using a frontal attack.

However, it was not necessarily impossible if one were to choose the means.

For that reason, he had prepared many things.

And finally, it was the time for him to attack...

“I'm sorry for making you wait. It took me some time to do the explanation, but they have agreed for us to enter the fortress...”

The knight who reported such news breathed out a heavily.

Looking back, the man gazed at the long lines of soldier formations that were behind him.

(We've finished all of our preparations... Everything has gone according to plan...)

Although his expression looked calm, inside the man's heart he could feel raging anxiety and frustration.

Because the fate of three countries lay heavily on his shoulders.

If he was just an ordinary man, he might shrink from the responsibility and be unable to properly move.

However, inside the man's heart, an earnest desire to fight could not be forgotten. He also felt the joy of being given the opportunity to demonstrate his power, mixed among various other emotions.

(This is fine... Everything should go well... It's no different compared to that time...)

He lifted the corner of his lips, tension and excitement began to rule.

The scene from a few years ago resurfaced inside his mind.

He remembered the times when he was desperately trying to protect his life and pride as a human being...

"Here we come!"

Following the man's words, the others nodded their head.

The troops slowly advanced towards Notiz plain.

Sounds of countless horses and wheels of the carriages.

In the dark night, the light of torches illuminated the silver armors.

They looked like the messengers of the god of death, that had come out from the realm of the dead.

The stage was the Notiz fort located on the border between Ortomea Empire and the Zalda Kingdom. Everything will end at the place where everything began, at the Notiz plain where General Belharres met his honorable end.



“Finally, next is the transport unit, huh? Their escort is around 2,000 men... Fumu, it seems like I can breathe a sigh of relief for now...”

Such words can be heard inside one of the offices inside the Notiz fort.

Along with a deep sigh, Greg Moore smokes a high grade cigar, a product of the central continent, as he tried to calm his heart. He had been appointed as the Notiz fort defense commanding officer to replace Rolf, and was also responsible for providing support to the front line troops.

“Indeed, finally we've finished carrying the foods and weapons from the imperial capital...”

Moore then put the cigar on the ashtray and received the documents his adjutant presented him with.

It was an official document with Ortomea Empire’s seal on it.

“Still... Isn't this number a bit too much?”

“Yes... I think they made it this way in anticipation of the possibility that the enemy performed a surprise attack...”

Hearing those words, Moore’s temple twitched.

“Joshua Belharres, huh?”

Unkempt appearance with short blonde hair.

Sturdy physique.

And the characteristic aura of a warrior that had survived many battlefields.

Wound marks on his face made him look very intimidating.

His belly might be slightly bulging because of age, but he was without a doubt a seasoned warrior.

And more than that, it was because of his abilities that he was appointed as the commanding officer of the Notiz fort.

Moore unconsciously rubbed his right thigh.

It was a wound he suffered during the battle against the Zalda Kingdom during the battle of Notiz plain.

His right leg was supposed to be amputated after getting crushed by a horseshoe.

Using expensive secret medicine and high-rank healing magic arts, they finally managed to regenerate the crushed foot but he still feels some discomfort from it.

Although there was no problems to perform with daily life.

However, when he wore armors and wielded his sword, it felt like his foot wouldn't move properly.

It might not be much of a problem if he fights against an ordinary opponent. But it would be an issue if he had to fight against someone very experienced.

It might be only a small little discomfort.

But such discomfort might be fatal during battles.

(Had this wound not leave this kind of feeling... I would've gone to the frontline...)

He had no intention of making light of his defense mission, but for Moore who was a warrior that was used to the front line, the situation was something worth to contemplate.

He then turned his sight at his beloved sword leaning against the wall.

“That annoying pest... Although the outcome of the war already can be seen, they keep on struggling... What a hateful parent and child. To think those two tried to stop the Ortomea Empire’s movements... Well, with what we have here, we might be able to soothe her imperial highness’ feelings a little...”

Prolonged warfare.

Currently, the frontline was being stalled at Ushias basin.

And Moore was irritated that he could not do more for the troops on the frontline.

“Well, with how many of our transport supplies are getting destroyed by Zalda's surprise attacks, it was natural for her imperial highness to be mad...”

As a result of the Zalda Kingdom's scorched-earth strategy, supply procurement locally was extremely difficult.

And no matter how much soldiers one possessed, one cannot do anything if one didn't have stable supplies.

“Lately we've failed to fulfill the demand from her highness Sardina, at least with this we can save our face a little...”

Although they had managed to not lose everything, but because they had to be wary of a surprise attack, the speed of the transportation had become considerably slower, and even if not all the supplies were destroyed, the damage done to them was not insignificant either.

And the reason for that was because the Zalda troops have no wish for the supplies.

They didn't hesitate to burn or crush the transports with rocks.

Making use of the advantages of narrow roads along the valley between the mountains to perform surprise attacks.

And because they were wary of a surprise attack, the Ortomea Empire had to increase the security of the transportation units which further hampered their delivery speed.

On the other hand, if they wanted more speed, they needed to reduce the security.

“But well, apparently the end of the war is near...”

Moore adjutant nodded his head while looking at Moore who lifted his mouth and laughed.

Information from the front line had said that Sardina had made a decision to perform an all-out attack against Fort Ushias.

“Indeed... What we have to do now is to send the supplies to the front line. Well, with 2,000 guards guarding the supplies it should be sufficient enough.”

The troops led by Joshua Belharres was estimated around 800 to 1,000 troops.

Joshua choose to take that numbers because it was very effective in terms of mobility and chain of command.

“Fumu, if we sent nearly 4,000 troops, that annoying man will meet his end. Although it is only temporary, the defense of the Fort would be reduced.....”

Hearing his aide words, Moore placed his hand on his beard while thinking.

Initially, Notiz Fort defense force was numbered around five thousand, but now it was down to around 2,500.

If two thousand soldiers were being assigned to supply transport security, then the defense of the fort will only have 500 troops in it.

Although it was sufficient enough to protect the fort from thieves, it was not near enough to protect such an important base.

“How about we wait for the dispatched troops to return?”

“No, it would be better for us to deliver the supplies soon, given the situation on the front line...”

Answering his aide, Moore shook his head while reading the letter he took from the drawer.

He could not let Sardina's all-out attack be hampered because of supplies problem.

Seeing Moore's determination, his aide nodded his head.

“Very well then, I will prepare everything. Please excuse me.”

The aide bows his head and leaves the office room.

After he left, Moore muttered in some small voice.

“A little bit more... After the war is over, everything will be restored...”

Although the Empire possessed a vast territory, the ruling foundation was more fragile compared to the other nations.

And right now, it can be said Ortomea Empire’s control over its territory had begun to shake.

The biggest reason for that was the declining of public security within the Ortomea Empire because of the invasion.

It was because Sardina had pulled out a considerable amount of soldiers from all over the country.

Thanks to that, there was only minimum security left for small cities or rural villages that possessed little to no strategic value.

Because Ortomea Empire was surrounded by enemies, they could not pull out soldiers guarding the borders, thus they pulled out the troops assigned to the domestic security instead, causing the public safety to deteriorate.

Particularly for the small cities and villages with little to no strategic value, the damage caused by thieves had escalated.

Moore himself had no intention of pampering the commoners.

He also didn't possess a lofty sense of mission such as the duty of a ruler.

In this world, the country was much more important than individuals.

Besides, the value of commoner lives was never that high either.

However, security deterioration was not something Ortomea Empire could ignore as an invading state.

And although the value of a commoner was low, it would be bad to completely ignore their needs as well.

In fact, if the public order gets much worse, the prestige of the country will fall, and the citizen will begin to question Ortomea Empire’s right to rule.

Although the aristocrats might think of the commoners as dust, they will be troubled if they start to revolt against them.

Once revolt happens, they might link it with the citizens' dissatisfactions.

And following that, trade and tax revenue will be hampered greatly too.

If it were to occur during the time the army invaded the Zalda Kingdom, then the troops might get isolated in the enemy's territory instead.

(It would be bad if the commoners' dissatisfaction exploded. It would be best to immediately fix the problem...)

In the Empire, Moore who understood the value of human resources was quite a rare existence.

Ortomea Empire might possess a vast land area, and when it comes to physical strength, many people were comparable to Moore.

Many also had studied more than Moore.

However, only a few people could achieve both in balance.

Just the other day, villages in the vicinity of Adelpho were seriously getting damaged by thief groups.

In order to calm the commoners, Moore had to dispatch security troops from the fort.

Also since he also needs good security for the supply transportation, it was inevitable that he did that.

"Your highness Sardina-sama... Please hold on for a while..."

While turning his eyes at the stars outside the window, Moore prayed for Sardina.

However, Greg Moore didn't realize.

That the God of death was creeping behind him...

Chapter 32

Harvest Time 3

“Fumu...”

Small mutterings resounded inside the room.

A man lying on the bed in the bedroom located on one of the corners of the fort.

He gazed at the ceiling and sighed for many times.

“Fuuh...”

Moore sighed again.

He closed his eyes but once again he immediately opened them.

No one knows how long he did that.

The darkness outside the window began to disappear. It was thirty minutes before the sun rises from the horizon.

(I can't sleep at all...)

The time he laid down on his bed had not changed.

In other words, he had laid down on the bed without being able to sleep for hours.

The sense of something wrong bothered him throughout the night.

And such anxiety troubled Moore's heart.

In the battlefield, when the time to sleep comes, soldiers should sleep. And soldiers should be able to switch between asleep and awake immediately. That was why soldiers should sleep whenever possible since no one knows when prolonged a battle spanning days would happen.

However, Moore could not sleep at all.

(I guess I have to give up sleeping now and get up...)

He got up on his bed and rang the bell placed on the bedside.

“Please excuse me... Is there something you need?”

He ordered a guard guarding his room to bring some water.

(Fumu... Delicious)

Moore poured the water from the jug into the cup, after he drank the cold water he could feel his body being refreshed.

It seems the anxiety had undermined his body.

After a while, Moore lay down on the bed once again.

It was not for sleeping this time.

(I don't understand... What is this feeling of anxiety?)

It felt like some warning bell resounded inside Moore's heart.

It was similar to the feeling when an ambush was about to happen.

It felt like an insect was crawling beneath one's skins.

However, Moore was currently on the border between Ortomea Empire and the Zalda Kingdom. Furthermore, he was inside a stone-walled fortress with thousands of soldiers guarding it.

Notiz fort had been built at the western end of the Notiz plain, which meant an attack could only happen from the front, and only if the Zalda Kingdom managed to defeat Sardina's army.

And Moore never received a report that Sardina had been defeated.

If the invading army was completely lost, it would cause the Ortomea Empire to

question its very own survival.

That was why such report of defeat wouldn't be missed at any cost.

“Damn it, what's going on with me...”

Saying that, Moore got off the bed and shook his head. Then he grasped his beloved sword.

From a logical point of view, the uneasiness inside his heart was something mind-boggling.

But his intuition said he could not discard it either.

In the end, he doesn't know whether or not he should ignore it.

(Because I've believed in my intuition all this time, I survived many battlefields...)

On his hand, he held a sword with a complicated carved pattern.

It was a sword forged by the best blacksmiths and also being bestowed with magic power performed by the best magic arts users.

For Moore, this sword was his alter ego.

His expression turns sharp the moment his hand held the sword cold handle.

In reality, his intuition was never wrong.

Because right now, flocks of hungry wolves were going to strike with their fangs.



Countless people crawled on the fort courtyard.

Many carts had been left alone forming long lines.

It was left unattended without bringing the goods into the warehouse because they thought it was already late when they arrived, and by the next morning they were going to leave to the front line, it was more efficient without unloading the goods.

And Ryouma used that opening to enter the Notiz fort at night. <TLN: Trojan Horse Ryouma style>

(Morons...)

For the enemy, it was certainly an effective choice.

Because they knew they were going to use the cart soon anyway, thus there was no reason to unload and load it again the next day.

However, because of that, Notiz Fort have to pay a great price.

If one were to check the documents properly, there should be a big difference between those submitted and the actual goods being transported.

Inside his heart, Ryouma laughed merrily.

“Begin...”

「始める」

前衛の二人が互いに顔を見合わせ小さく頷く。
そして、無言のまま突っ込んでくる。

(いっしょ……一体?)

(少し揺さぶってみるか……)

Ryouma shakes his hand forward.

Following the signal, ErnestGora's knights wearing Ortomea Empire armors scattered throughout the fort.

They also brought sufficient amount of oil with them.

No matter how hard a stone fortress was from the outside, once the fire is started from within, the people inside the fortress would suffer.

Since it was impossible to make everything inside a fortress using only stones.

“Now then, please dance according to my expectations...”

Small mutters leaked out from Ryouma's lips.

During the dawn, people's wariness were low, it was a convenient time for a sneak attack.

At this time, security guards who got up all night watching the surroundings are usually tired due to the fatigue.

Notiz fort might possess strong defensive power if attacked from the outside, but not from the inside.

Before long, the quiet morning turned into turmoil within a second.

“Fire! It's fire!”

“Extinguish it! Water, get some water!”

At first, it was a small voice, but then it was getting bigger and bigger.

“It's an enemy attack! It's an enemy attack!”

“Wrong! Calm down... Gather each units and wait for an order!”

“Are you a moron?! We will die if we don't extinguish the fire first! Bring some water here!”

Burning fires fuel human's fears, and black smoke interferes with their vision.

Fear due to the fire. No matter what world, humans always fear fire.

An angry and panic voice could be heard one after another.

Information got tangled up, caused no one to be able to grasp the situation accurately.

Everything was in utter chaos.

Furthermore, ErnestGora soldiers who dressed up as Ortomea Empire soldiers shouted random nonsense, causing the Ortomea soldiers getting further confused.

“Everything seems good, eh... Sara, Laura. Each of you takes 500 men with you and set fire on the storehouses. Since the security should be loose around now...”

““Yes!””

After the barracks and monitoring towers were set ablaze, next it was the turn of the storage rooms.

That was the plan Ryouma had devised.

“We have a lot of oil with us. Don't hesitate and burn everything to the ground!”

Sara and Laura nodded their heads after hearing Ryouma's words, then they left together with the soldiers.

The two of them didn't hesitate to head towards their destination because they had already memorized the structure of the fort beforehand.

“Now then, I should make my move as well...”

While looking at the Marfisto sisters who left the place, Ryouma pulled out his sword from its sheath.

“Here I come... Don't give them mercy! Kill anyone in sight! We don't need any war prisoners! Charge!”

“““Uoooooooooh!!!”””

A roar rose from ErnestGora knights who were standing behind him.



“Fire, you said?”

He replied to his adjutant's urgent report with a low voice.

His aide looked surprised that Moore had already worn his armor and ready for battles.

“Sir! There are fires surging within the fortress, and also the eastern and western towers.”

“What did you say?”

Moore knitted his eyebrows after he heard the report.

“What has happened? What is the security personnel doing?”

“I don't understand it myself. All of it happens in a split second... Every units are currently trying to extinguish the fire, but the progress is slow...”

Moore fell into silence after he heard his aide's report. His brain tried to process all the information which lead to one conclusion.

And with the sense of anxiety he had since last night, he immediately draws a clear conclusion.

And if he considers it properly, there were many unnatural points yesterday.

(Damn it... Those Zalda men... Are they aiming at my head? No, this is bad... If what they aimed was something I feared, the Zalda invasion will turn into failure... And her highness Sardina fate will...)

Certainly, fighting the fire was something very important.

However, it was obvious that the fire was being instigated by someone.

Thus it must not be just any ordinary fire either.

Their real aim was...

“You moron! does that meant everyone is leaving their post?!”

It was a sharp harsh voice. Moore began running...

(Not yet... If it's now, there's still a chance...)

It should be possible to calm down the troops and reorganize the chain of command if Moore manages to give out orders efficiently.

However, Moore himself needs to take over the leadership personally.

He needs to show his figure in front of the soldiers and inspire them.

“B-But still... How did all this happen...?”

His aide who followed behind him spoke while catching some breath.

Afterward, the soldiers they passed along the way follow them one by one.

Moore was currently descending through the staircase.

High-pitched metallic sounds clashing against each others could be heard.

However, before he can head towards the source, unknown figures were blocking Moore from moving further.

“Who are you people?! How dare you to block Moore-sama's path!”

It was not unreasonable for his aide to raise his voice.

In this world, social status was very important.

No one dared to stand in front of Moore's path since he was a high ranking knight who was given the command of Notiz fort.

Although they didn't have any intention of harshly punishing people because of it, it was certainly effective to be used to enforce order in this situation.

“You bastards, what unit are you coming from? Give me your name!”

The people who blocked their path then moved to the sides, and a man comes forward.

While feeling a faint sense of incongruity in his dignified footsteps, the aide raised his voice.

“Take your helmet off! Show me your face!”

The aide approached the man in a hurry.

“Wait! Get away from him!”

“Eh?”

Moore’s high voice resounded inside the fortress.

The moment the aide heard his voice, the aide could feel something cold stuck on his stomach.

A dagger pierced through his stomach.

“D-Damn it...”

Taste of blood stuck in his throat.

He had tasted it many times when he was near death during battles.

“What... has happened...”

He looked down and saw the bloodied dagger in the man's hand.

Light gradually disappeared from the aide's eyes. Until the end, the aide could not understand why he was being killed.

“I knew it, you bastards are people from Zalda...”

Hearing those words the soldiers standing behind Moore pulled out their swords.

Moore's words pulled those soldiers back to reality after they saw the unbelievable scene unfold before their eyes.

“Let's hear your name...”

It was a low and cold voice.

Murderous intent can be felt coming from Moore's whole body.

“Fine...”

Saying so the man took off the helmet and exposed his face.

A man with a good-natured face.

There was some charm from his appearance, but not absolutely handsome either.

“This is our first time meeting. I'm part of the Rozeria Kingdom's nobility, the ruler of Wortenia peninsula, My name is Mikoshiba Ryouma. Pleased to meet you.”

Ryouma then smiled warmly.

He slightly lowered his head while keeping watch of the enemy's movement.

However, Ryouma's soft smile was instead terrifying for Moore.

It felt like he was seeing a monster with the shape of a human.

Chapter 33

Harvest Time 4

It was a large hall located on the first floor.

The two stared at each others while the sounds of metals clashing nearby entered their ears.

Because the enemy surrounded them, their breaths turned rough. Or rather, it was because they felt something from the man standing in front of them.

(I see... So this guy is the one who killed Gaies-sama...)

Moore gazed at the individual standing in front of him.

At first glance, he was a young man with good physique.

A smile that looks good.

However, Moore can feel the sharp gaze the young man have.

That cold aura was filled with hatred.

(I see now, this guy is indeed dangerous for our country...)

Moore had heard rumors about Mikoshiba Ryouma.

He heard that Ryouma was similar to a dangerous monster who intentionally hide its fangs

Not only that, he heard Ryouma was like a poisonous snake when it comes to scheming.

(I've heard rumors about him enough to the point that I feel fed up. I heard he is a cautious and cunning man. And no matter how much advantage he has, he will always stand on the front line...)

Moore makes an eye signal to his other aides standing by his side to move up using the stairs.

It was a vague signal, but for those who know him, they would immediately understand what Moore had meant.

His other aides immediately head towards the stairs while bringing several soldiers with them.

(This is good enough... If we can gain some time, we can prevent the worst possible outcome...)

Inside the fortress library, various things that can never be handed over to an enemy were being kept.

After taking a glance at his aides retreating figures for a moment, Moore returned his gaze towards Ryouma.

(Did he have too much room, or did he have some other aim? Why is he only standing? Oh well, either way is good for me. It seems like he also wants to gain some time...)

Anyway, Ortomea Empire had its name reaching even across other continents as a powerful country from the western continent.

Yet a single man had escaped from such a powerful country. Not only that, he was an otherworlder whose social standing didn't exceed even a slave. Furthermore, he was also a fugitive for killing Gaies, one of the pillars supporting the Ortomea Empire.

If other countries found out about it, Ortomea Empire could lose its face. That was why the news of Gaies' death, as reported to the public, was that he passed away because of an accident.

A high ranking official died in the castle where the Emperor lives, not to mention the fugitive had managed to escape. It was obvious that the news had to be dealt with special care.

With the Emperor's absolute authority, the Ortomea Empire managed to save its face by keeping the truth within the inner castle. However, the more one tried to hide it, the easier it ends up leaking, that was also the truth.

Although it was being kept secret, it was natural for the general public to hear some rumors once or twice. It was to the respect of the country that no one speaks about it loudly, but Mikoshiba Ryouma was indeed Ortomea Empire's mortal enemy.

Looking at the surroundings, Moore clicked his tongue.

(Damn it, this is bad... Everyone is getting swallowed by this man aura.)

It was natural for Moore's subordinates to hate Ryouma.

But on the other hand, however, it was also natural for human beings to fear and feel awe at something or someone and be unable to move because of its presence.

Simply put, for Ortomea's Knights, Mikoshiba Ryouma was a hateful man, yet that they were unable to fully hate him.

The recent hard fights Ortomea Empire had these days. It was all started when Gaies, one of the military leader of the Empire died.

It was no exaggeration to say the man standing in front of them was the cause of Ortomea's suffering.

However, as a warrior and as a man, they also respected Mikoshiba Ryouma as someone powerful.

After all, he had managed to escape the Imperial Palace with his individual strength alone and fled the country by outwitting imperial princess Sardina at each turns.

A country against an individual.

There was no doubt the difference in power was like that of the sky against the earth.

Nevertheless, the man in front of them managed to escape Ortomea's fangs.

Even if Ryouma was their enemy, for Ortomea's knights, they couldn't help it, but recognize the achievements and abilities of such a man.

And it was also the nature of humans to envy things that one didn't possess.

(I guess I have no choice, I have to buy us time as much as I could by myself...)

One shall choose the best option.

However, Moore had no other options left.

While keeping an eye on the surroundings, Moore opened his mouth.

“I see... As expected of someone I heard from those rumors. Diverting our attention from the front with arson fires, your aim is to burn the supplies without a direct fight, am I right?”

Moore tried to be as much calm as possible, but it seems his efforts were meaningless. Hearing him speak, everyone's gaze shifted to Moore.

The only one who didn't change his expression was Ryouma.

Ryouma's attitude suggested that Moore's guess was right.

(It was natural for the others to not notice his aim, even I didn't until it was this late...)

Moore tried his best to keep his fighting spirit that was almost broken up, while his subordinates were at a loss for words after they heard his speech.

His prediction was right. However, as soon as he spoke about it, it turned into heavy pressure on the mind of Moore's subordinates instead.

The Ortomea soldiers thought they had invaded the Zalda Kingdom with overwhelming power. But it was overturned in an instant.

That was why it was normal for the soldiers to feel uneasy.

For them, it made them feel like fools who thought they were in an advantageous situation, but actually not.

(What a man... Are all of the events under this man's calculation? If that is true then, even the raids by thieves on the neighboring town or villages were also this man's doing?)

Inside Moore's mind, he manages to gather clues, pieces by pieces.

For starter, the aim of the attacks on town and villages was to reduce the security forces in Notiz fort.

Otherwise, it was impossible to think that the lack of security guards, the thief attacks and the enemy present in front of them on the same day as just a coincidence.

(But then, how the hell did he cross the country and attack us from the back with an army? The border between the Zalda Kingdom, ErnestGora, and the Ortomea Empire should have strict monitoring... No wait, there's one possible way, but... It can't be...)

There was only one possibility. However, such way was a very hard one to achieve.

In truth, it was impossible to monitor every inches of the national border.

There was no surveillance from satellite or radio in this world

The highway connecting every city across the western continent might have clear surveillance posts.

However, when it comes to an uninhabited area such as deep forests or steep mountains, the security on those places was low.

Even if one draw a border-line on the map, there was no actual man guarding such remote area.

Surveillance is usually being done around the important cities and border-crossing highways.

That was why, if one is brave enough to pass through the deep forests or steep mountains, one can actually invade any country.

In reality, those who are familiar with fights such as adventurers and mercenaries, or criminals such as thieves and others, it was normal for these people to explore or cross the border by using the forests and mountains.

However, that only applied to a small group of people, not a whole army.

Supply problems, marching speed, and others, there were many difficulties that make such maneuvers using an army as something next to impossible.

And above all, no matter how much risks are taken, if the whole army moves together, the movement would inevitably be detected due to its large numbers.

The danger of being detected by the enemy will increase as the size of the army increases.

But for the security of crossing those areas where monsters also exist, one very much needs to increase the size of the army.

In addition, a map was not as detailed as in the modern world.

Surveying technology itself was the field of state management, and most of the time national geography was handled as confidential information belonging to the military.

Under such circumstances, no detailed map was provided to the public no matter what era one was in.

For security and assured victory, one needed more soldiers, but to make the army maneuver successfully one also needs not be detected and thus to reduce the number of soldiers. Two contradicting choices.

That was why, in the long history of the previous world, many strategies were being carried out with the thought of a gamble or miracle, instead of a tactic.

And now, Ryouma was creating one such miracle. Plunging Ortomea Empire into a more desperate situation...

“Everything has gone according to your plan, eh?”

“Indeed, although it was not easy to achieve all of this either...”

Ryouma replied while shrugging his shoulders.

It might be a short reply, but he knew what Moore wanted to hear the most.

“Raids by thieves were scattered quite extensively around Notiz Fort. Which meant, small numbers of troops divided and entered the Ortomea Empire’s border before rejoining near Notiz fort while attacking towns and villages along the way, am I right?”

“You're right, by selecting people with skills from ErnestGora, Zalda Kingdom, and the private corps of thieves that General Belharres had prepared beforehand. We managed to pull it off although it was pretty close to gambling...”

“General Belharres private corps? Is this about the Red Moon group?”

It was the nickname of the unit the late General Belharres had created.

It was a unit filled with people with a criminal record, such as thieves, murderers and rapists.

Because of their vandalism, that group was hated by the citizens of the eastern Ortomea Empire.

“Apparently, they were initially tasked to grasp the Ortomea Empire’s topography. That was why I managed to use them effectively...”

“Everything is for victory... Is that what you wanted to say?”

“Indeed, for victory in this war, I will even employ criminals if there's value in using it. Everything is for victory...”



Ryouma said all of that with a gentle smile on his face.

In actuality, Ryouma himself knew that those group of people were heinous criminals

Back then, if Ryouma hadn't come to help Laura and Sara, both of them would have ended up getting raped.

People sometimes contradict themselves with the beliefs they claim to hold when it comes to victory in war.

Ryouma didn't like them and hated them. He hates them to the extent he wanted to kill them all, but this was not about likes or dislikes...

He could not forsake victory in war because of a personal grudge...

(What the hell is with this man...)

One didn't have to wash away people's actions and forgive them if it was something wrong.

However, one shall endure one's grudges if you needed their power in warfare.

Understanding that, Moore held his breath unintentionally.

Such behavior was not befitting of a warrior or a knight. It was the way of thinking of skilled politicians or diplomats.

(We cannot let this man alive any longer... He's too dangerous for our nation...)

There was still a chance for Moore to escape the current predicament.

If Moore used his full ability and sacrificed the knights around him, he might be able to escape.

However, Moore chooses to fight rather than escape.

(I should've earned enough time... What left now is to end this situation...)

“Fight me one-on-one! Mikoshiba!”

It was a sudden and absurd shout.

Everyone present turned an astonished gaze at Moore.

However, Moore had conclusive evidence that Ryouma wouldn't turn down his challenge.

In the first place, Ryouma should not be here if he was not ready for a fight.

(I don't care whatever your plan is...)

Fighting spirits spread inside Moore's body.

The excitement raised his body temperature.

Moore also started to activate the Muladhara chakra inside his body.

A stream of ragging Prana began to flow.

Moore then carefully controls the flowing prana while fixing his breath.

Following that, Moore also slowly activates the second and third chakra, the Swadhisthana chakra and the Manipura chakra.

(Preparations complete... I don't care if I have to die here... I will bring you down together with me!)

Moore grasped his beloved sword tightly, and the carved pattern on the sword began to emit a pale light.

Chapter 34

Harvest Time 5

The food warehouse was being burnt grandly to the ground. From inside the inflamed building, one can smell food turned to crisps.

And from the surroundings, angry voices could be heard.

Together with that, countless screams of pain also could also be heard.

It was a massacre.

Laura's gaze didn't waver even when such battlefield was spread in front of her, she only stared fixedly at the burning central building.

“Onee-sama... Is everything alright here?”

Along with the sounds of clashing weapons, a beautiful voice could be heard calling for her...

In such battlefield, that voice was not matching the environment.

But to those words, Laura answered without turning back.

“Yes, there's no problems here. Thanks to Ryouma-sama stopping Moore's movements, we managed to burn the warehouse smoothly. It will be impossible to stop this fire now even if they ceased their fighting... Not even if Moore used the water magic arts he's renowned for...”

In front of her, a large fire was burning the warehouse.

Not only because of the burnable goods, such result was also possible because they had used oil.

If it was still in the early stages then it would be possible, but since it was already this late, it had become impossible to stop the fire.

Of course, if Moore was able to take the lead to stop this chaos, then there would be a slight possibility he would succeed, but with Ryouma stopping him, such an event was now remote.

“How is your mission?”

“We also didn't encounter any problems. Because they thought we were part of their army when we infiltrated, the sudden fire has thrown all of the soldiers into confusion, thus making it easy for us to dispose of them...”

“I see, it seems like no one was injured? All is fine as long you're alright...”

Laura nodded her head without turning her gaze to Sara while grasping her iron sword drenched with blood.

One can certainly grasp from her voice that she was worried.

However, if she really felt worried, she should've shown a different kind of attitude.

But even with her being like that, Sara didn't show any anger towards her elder sister, Laura, for displaying such cold attitude.

Sara herself felt the same.

Both of them had been betrayed by their trusted vassals and sold as war slaves, but an old-faced young man saved them and gave their freedom back.

For the Marfisto sisters, giving everything they have for him was an absolute truth.

They would not hesitate to even sacrifice their lives for him...

“At this time, Ryouma-sama would be...”

Feeling a slight sorrow from Sara's voice, Laura turned her gaze at her sister who was now standing beside her.

“Probably, right now, Ryouma-sama is fighting Moore?”

Laura was not sure.

During the meeting, no related topic was being mentioned.

However, if Ryouma could take the head of Greg Moore who had a big reputation, he could expect more rewards as war merit.

For Ryouma who was currently trying to develop Wortenia peninsula, such rewards were very fascinating.

Whether it was money or power, for the current Ryouma he lacked both.

With that, considering Mikoshiba Ryouma's character, he was not someone who will abandon such opportunity.

“As expected... We should've gone with him...”

Words filled with anxiety and anguish come out from Sara.

No matter how strong Greg Moore was, as long they gang him with numbers, they could kill him.

However, Laura quietly shook her head.

“It's not necessary for us to do that... If Ryouma-sama didn't see the prospect of winning, Ryouma-sama wouldn't fight. Sara should also know that too, don't you?”

Ryouma had collected a lot of informations from Simone and Iga clan's members beforehand.

It was a fact that Mikoshiba Ryouma was weaker compared to the battlefield hardened Greg Moore.

Although Ryouma possessed comprehensive martial arts capabilities, he was not someone very proficient in magic arts, compared to Greg Moore who had experienced many battlefields as well, but also possessed high magic arts competence.

And not to forget, Greg Moore's magic sword ability.

Even though Mikoshiba Ryouma possessed the characteristics of a person from a different world, one still cannot replace actual experience.

That was why Sara's concerns were with founded.

Laura also understood that. However, she didn't doubt Ryouma's victory.

Or rather, she desperately tried to believe in it.

“We only need to finish our job properly...”

She squeezes such words from the depth of her heart.

It was not like she didn't feel any anxiety. Laura herself knew that there was nothing absolute in a battlefield.

That feeling was not related to her trust in Ryouma's ability.

It was more like she was being anxious because she was unable to stand besides her important person.

However, on the other hand, Laura also understands the importance of her work.

She was feeling anxious regarding her master's safety and also wanted to answer her master's trust towards her.

Such conflict broke out inside Laura's heart.

“Although the many surprises had thrown the enemy into confusion, it will eventually die down over time. It would be dangerous if many of the Ortomea Empire's soldiers managed to survive. We should devote our self with the current task and don't think about unnecessary worries...”

In her eyes, a strong determination could be seen.

However, Sara didn't miss the trembling when she looked at her sister's shoulders.

(Nee-sama...)

There were many things she wanted to say.

However, being able to sympathize with Laura's feelings, Sara left the place quietly after she turned her eyes towards the central building for a brief moment.

To fulfill their duty...

An anime-style illustration of two young women in dark, detailed armor. The woman on the right has long, flowing white hair and blue eyes, looking upwards with a slightly open mouth. The woman on the left has long, flowing blonde hair and green eyes, also looking upwards with a similar expression. They are both wearing dark, segmented armor with red accents. The background is a dark, fiery environment with red flames and smoke. The text is written in a stylized, blue font with a white outline, positioned vertically on the left side of the image.

「お姉様。こちらは？」



At the time Laura and Sara directed their gazes at the central building, the opening of Ryouma and Greg Moore's introduction to each other was over, and their decisive battle was about to start.

Dull silver light shone on Ryouma's eyes.

Among the swords created by the Iga clan's blacksmiths, there was the battle katana that boast a reputation as one of the strongest.

The katana was a masterpiece that would not lose in quality compared to the work of master blacksmiths that left their name in history.

Ryouma licked his lips while drawing his katana with a side stance, as if trying to hide his sword. <TLN: *Waki Kamae.*>

(The rock-solid Moore...)

Glint of delight can be seen from Ryouma's gaze, as he thought about the nickname of the knight standing in front of him.

If one were to prioritize his survival, he should've used the ErnestGora soldiers that were standing behind him to attack.

However, he had no such intentions.

The fact that Moore needs to find his end here was an absolute priority, but the rewards obtained from the way he died changed dramatically depending on which methods Ryouma choose. <TLN: *Like, you order your soldiers to gang the enemy's commander in chief, versus a one on one battle between two commanders in chief.. The fame, the rewards etc, would be different.*>

(I can't help it but somehow feel excited...)

In a battlefield, an opportunity for one on one battle was hard to happen.

That was why Moore's proposal could be said as a godsend for him.

The aura emitted by Moore's body was very similar to that of Ryouma's grandfather, Mikoshiba Kouichirou.

It was characteristic of a strong person.

In fact, Moore was someone who had his name spread even to the neighboring countries as a large broadsword user.

If Ryouma managed to kill him, the distinction for war services would be massive. If Mikoshiba Ryouma's name grew bigger, he could demand more things from Lupis for the development of the Wortenia peninsula.

This situation was within his satisfaction. And as well as a perfect opportunity for him.

But, outside of profit thinking, Ryouma also could feel the excitement from within his own emotions.

“Uoooh!”

Moore shouted out while raising his sword above his head.

His shout shook the atmosphere around them.

And his prana immediately activated the magic art engraved on his broadsword.

The distance between the two was still around 10 meters away, but Moore swung down his sword without hesitation.

At the same time, a crescent-like transparent wave flies toward Ryouma.

Instinctively Ryouma swung his sword diagonally to parry the attack.

Shock ran through Ryouma's hands, and blood comes out of one of Ryouma's shoulder.

“Khuu...”

If Ryouma didn't parry the attack, he might have lost his arm.

Dull pain starts to ache from his wounded left shoulder.

However, Ryouma didn't lose his concentration even for a bit.

(Is this the power of that water magic sword? Had I not gathered information beforehand, I might've died by now...)

Seeing water dripping from his enemy's sword, Ryouma sighed inside his heart.

Water magic with cutting specialty, [Water Cutter].

A memory which he saw back when he was in Japan started to resurface.

He remembered something he saw on TV, it was an education program about how water could penetrate solid object or cut an object if it had enough pressure.

Although it was unclear how the water magic scientifically works, the fundamental was similar.

The difference with Water Jet machine, Moore's magic sword didn't have any compression mechanism.

Not only that, he didn't have any water tank with him either.

He just needs to apply his prana to the magic engraved on his sword. Only that.

In that sense, one can say that such attack was a fairly convenient ability.

(I guess water attacks will come flying at me every time he swings his sword? Somehow, it feels like the blade flew away instead...)

A blade of water flew at high speed. To use a common image, it was very similar to the extended slashing attack that usually appears in manga or anime.

It was capable of attacking while maintaining some distance, not only that, it didn't require any chanting like normal magic arts. The advantage of such an ability was very big on a battlefield where life and death often stand on a knife's edge.

In addition to being able to use the sword's ability as a ranged attack, if one swung the sword sideways then it would become an anti-group attack. <TLN: Area of Effect attack>

However, even with all of that, it didn't mean such power had no weaknesses either.

Although the speed of the water attack itself was fast, the attack still needs Moore to swing his sword first, thus it was still possible to predict the flying water attack by observing the timing.

If Ryouma pays attention to Moore's arm movement and his foot position, as a martial

artist, those should be enough for Ryouma to predict when and where the enemy is going to attack.

(Certainly, that magic sword is really troublesome... However, if the magic attack can only appear along the sword's path, I still can handle it... Not yet, I still can do this without the use of magic arts.)

While turning his eyes to the back, Ryouma returned into middle-level-stance. <TLN: *Chudan no kamae*>

Since it was disadvantageous for him to deal with fast flying water attack with side stance. <TLN: *Waki no kamae*>

(Starting from his sword, the water attack can attack approximately around 20 meters away.)

It was only his prediction, but he was full of confidence.

That was also because he saw the water easily being repelled by the ErnestGora Knights' armor.

It was proof that the water attack pressure and speed would get dampened by nature.

The range of the attack was very long compared to the water jet cutter machine, but if one were to see the attack from the perspective of fantasy-like in this world then, had Moore's attack not lost its power as it went further, the attack should've torn the ErnestGora knights' body.

Not only that, there was also a problem that the attack was made of water.

It might have been different if the water was mixed with sand or stones, but the attack cutting power was limited to that of pure water.

Thus, even though it was powerful enough to harm the human body, without the strong pressure it was not something that was strong enough to slash a thick iron armor.

Ryouma was able to understand that after he saw his katana not breaking from the attack deflection earlier.

However, of course, it didn't mean he can safely escape from such attacks all the time either.

While clicking his tongue after he saw the chipped blade, Ryouma also tried to read Moore's mind.

(I need to pay attention to the distance between us... I think he will try to attack while taking advantage of his weapon and keep check of the distance between us...)

Ryouma gazed at Moore, observing his movement.

As Ryouma had expected, seeing he had managed to deflect the attack, Moore clicked his tongue and once again raised his sword high.

And again the water blade was released towards Ryouma the moment the sword was being swung down.

First shot, second shot, third shot...

It was a continuous stream of attacks.

After he swung his sword down, Moore immediately performed right and left slash as well.

Moore swung his sword as he roared.

While he prepared to defend against the attack with his katana, Ryouma felt a premonition.

(Somehow, those attacks feel dull...)

The monotonous attacks can be easily avoided.

Causing Ryouma to question why the enemy did it.

But, the answer to that question quickly appeared.

By the time the enemy performed the third slash, the water attack pushed the first attack forward with high speed.

The trajectory speed raised exponentially.

Had the attack assaulted Ryouma as it was, it would've torn Ryouma's body in half

who was wearing only light armor.

After he managed to deflect the wave of attacks, Ryouma returned to middle-level-stance. <TLN: *Chudan no Kamae*>

(Vertical and Horizontal... I see... That was his aim...)

Repeat monotonous attacks and suddenly pull an attack with different timing.

Ryouma would be dead if he didn't concentrate here.

Both men then glanced at each other eyes.

The Ortomea and ErnestGora's knights were also watching the match with a tense atmosphere.

(Well, I wouldn't be able to win this battle if I kept defending like that... I guess I'm in a more disadvantageous position than I had thought I would be?)

In order for Ryouma to win the battle, he needs to fill the distance gap between the two.

On the contrary, Moore wanted to keep the distance between them and disturb Ryouma's stance with a ranged attack.

(I guess his aim was to make that thing flew faster... Well, It might be true that his chance of winning lay there...)

What comes to Ryouma's mind was a sword technique called quick sword draw. He thought the enemy was going to bet all on it. <ED: *iaijutsu*>

But soon, Moore overturned Ryouma's expectation that he wanted a long range battle.

The moment his third chakra's ring [Manipura] activated, Moore's speed and muscular strength exploded. After he performed a quick draw to create a water attack like before, he also dashed forward with a speed that was beyond what a normal human could possibly do.

And at the next instant, violent sparks scatter between the two people, sharp metal sounds echoes inside the hall.

For a moment, Ryouma's body floated into the air.

He was using the momentum to jump back to create some distance.

(That was bad!... He charged to attack the moment I thought he was going to only perform long ranged attack... Not bad!)

A drop of blood appeared on Ryouma's cheek, but Ryouma smirked with a fearless smile on his face.

Because of the fast attack, he didn't manage to fully deflect the water blades. And that water blade grazed on Ryouma's cheek.

Using a long ranged attack to cause the enemy to make an opening, then close the distance and bring the fight into close quarter combat. It was a difficult method, that requires precise timing.

The trace of the attack still could be seen on the weapon in Ryouma's hand.

Some of his katana's blade was now chipped because of it.

(With a difference in weapon performance, if I met that attack head on once again, my sword would break in two...)

Although it was a katana made for battle, compared to Moore's magic sword, the one Ryouma had had no magic arts being imbued in it.

In other words, his weapon was nothing more than a durable sword.

In contrast to that, Moore had a magic sword in his hand.

Such swords won't get dull because of blood fat and many other things, and by applying Prana to it, the sword durability will increase.

Ryouma too could use magic arts, but he was lacking in terms of experience in using them compared to Moore.

Furthermore, Moore himself seemed to have realize that in this battle Ryouma's sword had not yet been imbued or enhanced by magic arts.

(Well, this is also fine. When one has to fight in order to win, the weaker side just needs

to fight the way they want to...)

The difference in weapon performances. And as well the difference in experience as a magic arts user.

If one were to simply see it from the viewpoint of the strong versus the weak then, Ryouma wouldn't be able to reach Moore.

Of course, it was also true that the strong have the higher possibility of winning. However, it didn't mean the weak could not win either.

There were many methods to use when disadvantaged, like a better strategy, attack the enemy when they fall asleep, increase one's allies and turn the fight into a collective warfare, take the enemy's family members as a hostage, or use poison, and many other options.

If one didn't consider the ethics or one's reputations, it was not possible for the weak to gain an easy victory.

Just for argument's sake, no matter what situation you were in, as long you keep on walking, there will be always a way, unless you give up along the way.

For Ryouma who had been taught by his grandfather regarding that matter since a young age, his heart wouldn't falter just because he was put in the weaker position.

(Since he seems to have realized that I lacked experience in both, battlefield martial arts and magic arts , I bet he will soon come attacking at me because of arrogance..... And looking at the time we've spent, he will also lose his patience soon... With that, I guess the next attack will decide this duel...)

The last moment of the duel will come in a few seconds.

The moment when Ryouma obtained the victory.

Chapter 35

Harvest Time 6

Sounds of blades clashing with each other resounded in the open space.

And a few seconds later, both overlapping shadows jumped back to create some distance between them.

No one knew how many times they had repeated such actions. With rough breathing, both people's shoulders went up and down.

“You're tougher than I had expected...”

Moore slightly murmured those words while keeping his eyes on Ryouma who had kept his posture in front of him.

The long-distance water attacks didn't bring the results Moore had expected, and even if he brings the fight to close quarter range, Ryouma continuously manages to accept his attacks.

(I never knew there was that way of fighting... I guess this is how he, no, otherworlders fight, huh?)

Although it was a great misunderstanding, Moore felt proud for being a person who experienced fighting against a technique that was from another world.

Moore's way of fighting itself was not wrong.

It was a simple way of fighting by using magic arts to further strengthen one's body that was already tempered by practicing martial arts, Moore was very familiar with that way of fighting.

It was a fighting strategy that maximized muscle strength, and that method was also the most popular among the knights of this world.

But Ryouma's way of fighting was slightly different, not only did he use his muscle

strength to the maximum, he also used combat strategy that combines weak and soft fighting movements that utilize his opponent's power. <TLN: Similar to how Aikido works, in sword style I don't know what school teaches that kind of style, but I think it is part of the counter-sword style, for reference try to read the manga called Kurogane, it was a manga about kendo with counter style as the focus.>

Ryouma himself has no particular fuzz regarding his method. Because for him, to fight means to kill his enemy, just that.

Sometimes he goes in with full force, sometimes he pulls the enemy in and handles it with a soft technique.

He mixes both ways very well.

For him, that was the way the weak should fight against the strong.

As for Moore, who had been used to fight against opponents with the same tactics as him, this duel was very refreshing for him.

For the weak to be able to do that, one needs to concentrate and pays attention to the opponent's flow and then try to control it. In a battlefield, it was hard to do that kind of thing, because of how one should pay attention to other things rather than just the enemy in front.

Even for Ryouma's martial arts master, Mikoshiba Kouichirou will also meet difficulties when performing such tasks on a battlefield.

Of course, Moore didn't realize it, he just felt that the way Ryouma fight was very different compared to the way of fighting he had experienced so far.

(Well, whatever. I just have to deal with it...)

In order to gain victory, Moore had gathered information from the surroundings as much as possible and formulated a method to win.

(Should I cut down his physical strength with water attacks? I guess no, he could even defend against the continuous attacks... Although it is possible to make some scratches, I guess it is impossible to cause a fatal injury with it... Instead, I would be wasting my Prana and losing my strength first...)

That didn't mean scratches were completely useless. Even if it was a small scratch, if there were quite a lot, it would cause a huge amount of bleeding, and as a result, the enemy's physical's strength would be greatly reduced.

However, in exchange for a scratch, Moore needed to use a huge amount of Prana, thus it was not worth it.

In war or business, cost-efficiency was very important.

In other words, it was directly tied to the return on investment versus production cost.

<TLN: The cost of using the skill versus the result from using it.>

Moore then glanced at the sword in his hand.

Although it was certainly convenient for him to be able to use magic arts attack without chanting, it was never something that can be regarded as invincible or like a versatile ability.

Especially the amount of Prana consumption during the fight.

For Moore, something like that was not something he could ignore easily, even though he was a warrior who could activate the third chakra ring, Manipura.

Furthermore, he had to maintain the three chakra rings together with the consumption of Prana, to use his water attacks. No matter how much Moore boasted about his abundant Prana, he would still run out of it during battle if he used it recklessly.

No matter how high-powered the car, if there is no fuel left, it won't be able to run.

(I guess I can only end this fight if I make it into a close quarter showdown, huh?)

However, Moore immediately denied that idea.

(No, if he keeps defending like this, it would be hard for me to inflict any fatal injury. Even if I brought the fight to close quarter combat, the fight will still drag on... Furthermore, all would be over the moment I run out of Prana.....)

Certainly, in overall strength, Moore was stronger compared to Mikoshiba Ryouma.

However, in a one on one duel, such evaluation was not necessarily guaranteed victory.

The point of Moore's strength was located in his proficiency of using magic arts.

In other words, the moment he runs out of Prana, Moore would turn into just a normal knight with more battlefield experience.

But, that also didn't mean Moore would turn into someone weak, although he will definitely find it harder to kill Ryouma, since even with magic arts at his disposal, he had already met with serious difficulties in killing Ryouma.

In front of Moore, right now stood a man with a body as strong as a beast, unyielding will and spirit.

If he showed any openings, that beast of a man would definitely strike and kill him.

(If we are talking about talent, I guess he has more of it than I do, I guess?)

Moore who used magic arts, and Ryouma who did not.

It was a reality that was difficult to admit, but one cannot do anything but be honest about it.

Because in a battlefield, reality trumps anything.

However, such things were only understood by the two people engaged in the duel.

“““Uoooooh! Victory for Moore-sama! Glory to the Ortomea Empire!!!”““

The screams of the Ortomea Empire soldiers who watched Moore's fight from a distance resounded.

It was natural for the soldiers' morale to raise if they saw that their commander was attacking relentlessly, and the enemy was only able to defend.

Because of that, for them, Moore looked more powerful compared to Ryouma.

It was also no wonders that the surroundings thought that Moore would be victorious.

(Che... Those morons...)

A gaze of resentment was directed to the nearby soldiers for only an instant.

If it was the usual duel, it would be one's pleasure to get praised and cheered like that.

The cheers that were directed towards Moore would usually give an extra fighting power. <TLN: Human physiology, the effect is like an increase in motivation etc... Welp, I don't need to explain it further, yes?>

Well, outward appearances aside, for Moore, looking at those people who didn't know anything yet were shouting so irresponsibly, it caused him to feel irritated. but because he knew that they cheered him out of good will, it left him at a loss for words instead.

And because of that uncomfortable feeling, it caused Moore's steps to become gradually more tense.

(Tch, I can't be too tense at this time... But now I see, the reason he had been playing defense all this time was for this, huh... And as expected, I need a little bit more time for full recovery...)

Particularly about his feet, which didn't feel right when he tried to draw his sword.

Discomfort. It was something he felt in one part of his body that would erode Moore's movements as time goes on.

To heal his wound, he had been using a uncommon method, which caused him to feel a sense of discomfort.

(Tch, if this drags on... I have no other way but to turn this duel into a close quarter combat, huh?)

It was something he had dismissed before but he could not think of any other way.

(Well then...)

He had no choice but to use his last trump card.

Moore needed to pay a great price for using it. And once a trump card was revealed, it can't be called one anymore.

But, Moore had already made his decision.

Even though he had strengthened his body with magic arts, when it comes to swinging

sword, the lower part of the body was very important.

(A little more... please endure it a little bit more...)

While glancing at one of his legs, Moore raised the large broadsword he had above his head.

The killing intent was being released from Moore's whole body.

The raised broadsword began to spark under the reflection of the lamp's light.

"DIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE Mikoshiba!"

Moore shouted his words with a roar.

(The first attack, it will come diagonally!)

His muscles started to strengthen. His brain becomes highly focused too, increasing his speed and reflexes.

It was the instant where humans increase their concentration to the extreme.

Moore put a large amount of Prana into his sword and swung it down, a very large water blade that cannot be compared to the previous ones flew towards Ryouma.

And without stopping, Moore continued to slash the sword horizontally.

(The second strike from the left...)

The water blades immediately assaulted towards Ryouma.

(Ceh... As expected, he's still able to defend against it, huh?)

On Ryouma's hand, there was a thick katana sword that had cut the water attack that came flying at him, and smashed it.

If it was up until that far, then it was still the same as before.

But this time, it was different.

Moore clicked his tongue and strengthened his body much further.

The third attack had not yet been executed, which usually comes at the same time.

Although he cannot use it all the time, Moore was someone who could perform three consecutive attacks with his beloved sword.

Because his sword can be categorized as a longsword, it was very hard for a normal person to change their stance immediately after performing one slash.

Moore's beloved sword was boasting twice the thickness of the usual swords and had a full length of up to 1,5 meters.

The weight of it exceeds ten kilos.

Certainly, it was not impossible to lift the sword, but if one were trying to fight with it, the story would change completely.

The common one-handed sword weights around 1,5 kilos. Moore's sword weights double or even triple that of a normal two-handed sword which is usually around 3 to 5 kilos.

Furthermore, if a human swung such a big sword, the centrifugal force would be applied, which caused the weight of the sword to be multiplied during an attack.

One needs a lot of effort to use such a sword. Not only strengthening the body, but also in training to gain proficiency in using one's own weapon.

In Moore's eyes, the figure of an exhausted Ryouma was being reflected.

It seems like after he prevented the oversized water blades, he had cut loose some tension.

(You moron, with this you will die!)

He had consumed considerable time to put his body into the stance. He had only used two consecutive attacks, this third attack was the one he had planned as a surprise move.

(Eat this!!)

He draws his sword backwards to the limit.

He put all of his power for this last attack on his hands and lower body.

All of his muscles screamed all at once due to the force deployed.

It felt like his muscle fibers were about to get torn apart due to the stance.

Especially the burden on his wounded leg and waist were huge.

But Moore ignored all of the pains.

And because in order to endure the pain, he had bitten his lips too strongly, it caused them to bleed now.

This will be the his strongest skill in action.

It was an attack that used all of his body power to the limit.

(The final attack! Die!)

He bet everything on this one finisher.

Moore who had poured all of his Prana began to swing his sword.

But at the next moment, red splash with a strange metal sound resonates after the two people intersected.

Two shadows passed each other in the blink of an eye.

Silence dominated the place.

(I-Impossible...)

Something warm flow out from his neck.

His respiratory trachea and oesophagus were completely cut off.

Something hot gets caught in his throat, and red blood begins to falls from Moore's lips.

Power escaped Moore's body all at once, and he fell to the ground.

(I see... This guy... magic arts...)

Moore certainly caught a glimpse of it.

The sight that can't happen if Mikoshiba Ryouma could not use magic arts.

For Mikoshiba Ryouma to fill the distance within such a short amount of time. The moment he lost his strength, the moment his neck was being cut off...

He understood...

All of Mikoshiba Ryouma's aim.

And as well the meaning of the smile Mikoshiba Ryouma had when they met for the first time...

“Your Highness... Please forgive me...”

In his final moment of fading consciousness , Moore apologizes to Sardina for his unworthiness.

Although he understands that it was just for self-satisfaction...

Chapter 36

Front and Back 1

“A messenger huh? If you're someone from the Ortomea Empire, then... I guess you're a new face? I've never seen you before... Your name is Sudou, am I right?”

Heavy silence dominated the office room.

Julianus the first sit deeply into his chair while turning his line of sight towards the man kneeling in front of him with pity and ridicule.

For someone who was in the position of disadvantage all this time, this scene was the best.

A reversed situation.

A sense of superiority dominated Julianus the first sensation.

“Yes, your majesty. Thank you for granting me this audience...”

“So, what do you want by coming to my place? Is it to surrender?”

A sarcastic tone leaked from Julianus the first's mouth.

It was only a few days ago that a report that the Ortomea's rear supply base, the Notiz Fort, had been destroyed by Mikoshiba Ryouma.

As a result of that, the Ortomea's imperial army, which was locked in a battlefield around Ushias basin ended up getting isolated inside the enemy's territory, with their supplies line cut off.

With that, the Ortomea Empire invading strength of nearly 60,000 men ended up becoming like rats inside a bag.

Even if they were a big army, the fact that they were separated from their home countries was devastating.

The commanding officers aside, the unscrupulously drafted citizens and mercenaries

would definitely become upset with the situation.

Under such circumstances, the Ortomea Empire's army could not do anything else but send their messenger to Julianus the first to negotiate for surrender.

An unconditional surrender.

Although what Julianus said was indeed the truth, Sudou felt the words he had heard were very ironic.

But because Sudou understood Julianus' feelings, e didn't feel angry from such ironic words.

Sudou raised his face slowly and opened his mouth towards the pathetic clown sitting in front of him.

"There is no such a thing... An unconditional surrender negotiation, I didn't come for that..."

Sudou shook his head.

"Then, why did you come here? It can't be, but did you come here for a cup of a tea? But then I guess you cannot afford such a thing now, huh?"

Arrogance came out from both men's mouth.

Toward Julianus words, Sudou smiled bitterly.

With just a single victory.

However, no one really understood the meaning of this victory.

Up until now, it was always the Ortomea Empire that took the initiative.

When and where to attack. They completely controlled the flow of the war.

In that sense, now with Notiz fort fallen, Ortomea and Zalda-led allied forces changed roles.

Towards the figure of Julianus who desperately held back his happy expression, Sudou desperately tried to suppress his laughter.

(Such a stupid man... As expected of a clown. Despite the victory he had, it was not something he obtained with his power...)

Certainly, one existence had lit the light of hope towards the Zalda Kingdom.

Considering the current state of the Zalda Kingdom who had been always on the defeated side, this rear-blocking strategy could be said as their hope of resuscitation.

But, that didn't mean it solved all the problems.

While there were some problems solved because of such event, it also created other issues that were harder to solve.

Furthermore, it had the potential to become fatal unless the Zalda Kingdom solved it by themselves.

(Now then, just how far does the Zalda Kingdom knows where they are standing...)

Indeed the situation was greatly reversed, and now the Ortomea Empire's army was being cornered.

However, that was only a temporary situation.

"The reason why I've come here is to end this unfortunate war..."

Sudou slowly opened his mouth.

He had used a tone that was befitting of a young child pulling a prank.

"What did you say?"

Being unable to understand Sudou's unexpected words, Julianus knitted his eyebrows.

"To put it simply, Ortomea Empire wishes for a harmonious relationship with the Zalda Kingdom."

Thirst for blood surged from Grahart Henschel's body who stood by Julianus side after he heard Sudou's words.

Murderous intentions start to leak out like a snowstorm towards Sudou.

(I guess they are not stupid enough to show anger at this place, huh? Splendid...)

Sudou had gathered information regarding Henschel and Julianus beforehand, but both of the men were calmer than he had thought.

But that was natural, after all, if one was trying to win in a diplomacy battle, one should hide one's feelings.

(Julianus aside, that Henschel man, he is far better than I had thought... Looking at this, there seems to be some room for negotiations.)

A reconciliation negotiation proposal comes from the Ortomea Empire side who was the one that started everything.

Thus it was natural for Henschel to feel anger since his nation had been overrun by them all this time.

But thanks to his strong discipline, he had managed to show a deadpan face despite Sudou's remarks.

It was evident that he understood that it won't mean anything if he gets emotional here.

But it also meant that there was a room for negotiations.

(Because there won't be any if the other side was already spewing anger before talks begins...)

As long he was being given a chance to talk, Sudou was convinced that he would be able to obtain victory.

“Pardon me, but I don't understand your words. What do you mean by that, I wonder?”

“The meaning is the same as I had said, your majesty. The Ortomea empire wants a temporary harmony between our nations.”

Light shone in his eyes.

“You... are serious huh...”

Hearing Sudou's serious words, Julianus sighed deeply.

He felt amazed.

After invading another nation, they had shamelessly proposed a reconciliation, Julianus felt amazed.

“Do you realize that it was your nation that triggered this war?”

“Of course, your majesty. It was all started the moment my country attacked yours.”

Towards Julianus' question, Sudou answered back smoothly.

It was an anticipated question.

In diplomacy, it was important to have both confidence and some slight arrogance.

“If you understand that, then why do you think we would accept reconciliation proposed by your side?”

Hearing that, Sudou's eyes glinted.

The situation had thrown Julianus the first into confusion.

He also felt anxiety from Sudou's attitude.

“Pardon me for interjecting...”

Henschel's voice echoed.

“Do you really think that our country would listen to that?”

A few months ago, Julianus would've definitely jumped into the negotiation.

However, the scale of the war was leaning towards the Zalda side right now.

Thus Julianus didn't feel it necessary to take Sudou's proposal by this time.

However, Sudou who didn't feel shaken by Julianus words opened his mouth with a smile on his face.

“Indeed, if your Majesty understands the position your majesty’s country is in, I think your majesty will definitely accept our proposal.”

“What do you meant?”

“It is simple, really. I come here as a friend who wishes to help you out from the predicament you find yourself in.”

Towards Sudou's arrogant attitude, Julianus even forgot to shout.

There were indeed people who would show such arrogant attitude before the ruler and get punished...

Yet, Julianus could not shout such order against the smiling man in front of him.

If one were to ask why, it was because he felt a premonition, a gut-feeling, a survival instinct...

“In the first place, does your majesty realize? That your majesty has been dominated all this time...”



Sudou lifted his lips into a smirk.

He was sneering.

He was sneering towards the fools who didn't realize the position they were in.

“When was it? Ortomea Empire's army 60,000-strong men are trapped like rats inside a bag. Not only that, they should be in the position of lacking supplies due to the surprise attacks, and should soon runs out of reserve.”

Although he felt uneasy, Julianus kept his calm expression towards Sudou's bullish attitude.

“You will run out of supplies, and replacement for armor, then no matter how big an army, it will only turn into a paper tiger, no?”

“Certainly, that is a fact. As your Majesty said, our army is being cornered. However, if your majesty thought that your majesty is in a superior position then that is nothing more than an illusion.”

(Here comes the critical moment...)

Just as Sudou thought of that. His body trembled with excitement.

“Well then, how about this... How does your majesty intend to end our army? Does your majesty really think your majesty could destroy our Empire entirely?”

“What did you say?”

Julianus knitted his eyebrows unable to understand Sudou's words.

“Just like I said, your majesty. There were three ways to end the war. One of them is to destroy the enemy completely, lose against the enemy, or negotiate for a ceasefire and reconcile during the war... With that being the case, which kind of way does your majesty wish to end the war?”

Win, lose or a draw.

Each of them had its own variation, but to put it briefly that were the three choices that existed.

“That is...”

Hearing Sudou's words, Julianus was at a loss for words.

He realized that Sudou had pointed out his lack of vision.

The other day, right after the Notiz Fort fell, Elena while leading the Zalda army inflicted significant damage to the retreating Ortomea Empire's army.

The trend of the war indeed began to tilt toward the Zalda's side.

However, that was only limited to this war.

In the Zalda Kingdom, it was the aristocrats who held the real power. The Royal Order and the Royal Guard had also suffered a lot of damage to their war potential in men right now, and the reinforcements from the other countries will not help in the invasion of the Ortomea Empire going forward.

Under such circumstance, it would be impossible to make a reverse invasion strategy against Ortomea Empire.

Unless Julianus managed to direct the entire alliance army to invade the Ortomea territory, he won't be able to do anything.

If that was the case, only two options were left.

Continue the unfortunate war until the day the Zalda Kingdom is getting destroyed, or negotiate a peace agreement.

In that view, it was a huge improvement that a peace request had come, compared to the previous messenger who advised surrender.

“Let me ask your majesty once again who seems to understand the current situation. Would you like to keep this unfortunate war going?”

He sounded like a devilish temptation.

Towards Sudou who said those words with a smile on his face, Julianus had no other options but to agree with Sudou's proposal.



On that day, the capital city of the Zalda Kingdom Periveria was being covered with wild enthusiasm.

Or rather, it was not just Periveria. It was likely that the entire Zalda Kingdom felt the same atmosphere.

It was a proof that the dark cloud that had covered the Zalda Kingdom until the other day had been cleared up.

On both sides of the main street, a lot of people gathered.

It was full of young and old people, even an old man holding a cane continued to wave at the soldiers marching the road.

“Hurray! Zalda Kingdom, Hurray!”

“God Bless the King! Glory for our country!”

People line up on the sides of the main street and shouted words of victories.

Just the other day, the war against the Ortomea Empire which lasted more than a year had come to an end with a peace negotiation.

That mean, the various taxes that were being imposed due to the wartime emergency had been lifted, and the men who had wife and child finally can go back home.

The news had brought them the hope of returning back to their former calm life.

However, there were some people who didn't share the same sentiment.

One of the men was the king of the country who had made the decision to proceed with the peace talks.

He was sitting deeply in his chair inside his office while looking at the ceiling.

“I wonder if what I did was the right decision?”

It was a deep voice filled with anxiety.

It was proof that he was not confident with the decision he made.

“I don't know...”

In Julianus response, Henschel slowly shook his head.

“At least, we managed to earn some time, that was a fact...”

“Time, huh...”

The Ortomea Imperial army had begun their full retreat.

Although temporary, depending on the future, it was possible for them to gain a few years of time.

Thus it was possible to gain the time to rebuild the war-torn Kingdom.

“I cannot waste the little time we have now...”

“By your will, sire...”

Grahart Henschel nodded his head deeply, confirming Julianus words.

Chapter 37

Front and Back 2

The place was one of the room in the Royal castle within the royal capital, Periveria.

Mikoshiba Ryouma who had received the message that peace talks were going to happen after he captured the Notiz Fort, had started to draw the soldiers back to the royal capital.

(They are being happy while knowing nothing.)

Ryouma sneered at the merry people around the castle town.

'Ignorance is bliss.' That saying was really true...

(How pitiful...)

The people in the royal capital didn't realize the dangerous situation they were in.

They cannot understand that, because they can only see the problems which were in front of their eyes. Like a child playing on top of a lake covered with only a thin ice.

They didn't realize that sooner or later, they might fall into the bottom of an abyss.

(But then again, even if they understood the situation, they will only see that they will meet a rough future...)

Inside Ryouma's mind, the Zalda Kingdom King's face emerged.

To be able to predict the future was not always something good.

They were the only handful of people capable of doing that after they observed the many events from the surroundings.

The problem was that even if one can predict the future, it didn't mean one can avoid it.

Even if one were to prepare against the predicted adversary, many unexpected events can still occur, And it was the worst for the Zalda Kingdom which didn't have an effective central government.

(After this, it depends on that old man abilities... But I guess, it would be hard...)

Although it was a ceasefire negotiation, it seems like the Ortomea side was already taking the initiative. No matter how much Julianus made his moves, it was doubtful that he would be able to make a huge impact. <TLN: *Winning is complicated*>

Realistically thinking, the Zalda Kingdom's national strength was too small for them to improve their situation with the time they bought from the negotiations. Furthermore, while Ortomea Empire proposed the peace talks, they also already thought of another way to win.

According to Ryouma's observations, there were some traitors among the nobles of the Zalda Kingdom. And they seemed to hold very significant influence within the Kingdom. Otherwise, the situation wouldn't be this dire.

(Everything will depend on the negotiations, but I believe the hostility will reopen within one year...)

Ortomea Empire would stretch the negotiations as long as they needed, and then end them without any resolution when they were ready for another war. After that, they can just invade the Zalda Kingdom, once again.

For the Ortomea Empire, these peace negotiations were only for the purpose of evading the complete destruction of their army, and not seriously talking for the consideration of a peace treaty with the Zalda Kingdom.

When that happens, the people who were now cheering will change their attitudes and raise a voice full of grudges.

If the expected didn't come true, it was in humanity's nature to feel grudges. Because Ryouma didn't feel any dislikes against him, he could only look at Julianus with a pitying gaze.

(Well I guess I can't do anything about it... It was something inevitable... Besides, as long as I get the objective I wanted, I should not get involved any further with this

Kingdom...)

People might be pleased that the war had ended, but things can't be that simple.

The end of the Zalda Kingdom was floating inside Ryouma's mind.

However, Ryouma's thoughts were being disturbed by the noisy conversation he heard from behind him.

“It was a flavor that I've never tasted before, but there were a lot of tea types, huh... Which place is the origin of this one?”

“Yes, I heard that one is a product from Lisnose.”

“From the central continent?”

Sara nodded her head answering Elena's question.

“Because this one is Ryouma-sama's favorite, thus we import them to Sirius City. How about another helping?”

Elena directed her gaze at the cup which became empty and lifted her lips.

“The faint fragrance of the tea leaves is really great... Well then, please another one...”

This time, Laura presented the dishes she had towards Elena.

“Oh, my? This is...”

“It is a confection created after hearing the description from Ryouma-sama, the name is Macaron. It is very good you know...”

“Oh my, really? It has really an interesting shape, doesn't it?”



Saying that Elena brings the Macaron to her lips, and the moment it entered her mouth, her cheeks loosen.

“This is... it uses a significant amount of sugar doesn't it?”

“Yes, it seems like it was very common for the people from Ryouma-sama's hometown to make it this way...”

To put it more accurately, they didn't hold down the consumption of sugar.

What's important was for the people to keep the balance in using sugar.

“Hee... Not bad Ryouma-kun...”

“Thank you, though, it was really hard to gather all of the ingredients...”

Ryouma answered Elena's words with a bitter smile on his face.

In this world, confectionary is something that was usually made by chefs, since it was using a large amount of sugar, which was considered as a luxurious item.

And for the most part, the upper class restricts the amount of sugar those chefs can use.

That also included everyday lives.

Rather than taste, sugar was mostly used to show one's own financial and political power.

As a result, for someone who had come from modern Japan, the taste of confections in this world was very dull.

The first bite aside, it was very boring eating confections of this world.

He can forgive it if it were only the liquors, but he was really irritated with the taste of confections in this world.

(Thanks to Asuka, I guess...)

She would usually force him to make food together sometimes, but looking at the

current situation, it made him feel thankful towards that cousin of his.

When Ryouma received the teacup from Sara, he sat down deeply on the sofa in front of Elena.

“With this, the war has ended...”

Elena opened her mouth while lowering her eyes slowly.

“Indeed, it is a satisfying result...”

“I guess so...”

Elena only answered Ryouma's with short words.

For the time being, the Ortomea Empire's army had pulled back. It can be said that the reinforcements had fulfilled its mission.

Even if the peace was only for a brief time, even if it was only stalling for the inevitable.

“After the ceasefire messenger came to explain the situation, I spoke with Eclatia for a bit...”

“Did she say anything?”

“She said that she will keep in touch with her home country and see the future movements. Well, she seems to speculate the Ortomea's aim as well... But honestly, it was something that couldn't be helped...”

“And?”

Towards Ryouma's question, Elena shook her head quietly.

“Mist Kingdom doesn't have more leeway... Frankly speaking, it would be impossible for providing reinforcements beyond this...”

Zalda, Rozeria, and Mist. Among the countries called the eastern countries, the most stable and powerful country was the Mist Kingdom, where trade with the central continent was thriving.

However, because they were rich, they also have a lot of enemies.

The border with the southern kingdoms was always tense, considering that Mist Kingdom strength lay with its navy, it was hard for them to dispatch a large army to help another country.

On top of that, the battles were far from their country.

Although they sent their army because they understood the importance of the conflict, they never liked the war.

With such thought, the ceasefire this time was not something that the Mist Kingdom thought as disadvantageous.

“If that’s the case then, as expected...”

“Right, I will return to the Rozeria Kingdom as soon as possible and replenish my soldiers for the next round... Though how far her majesty Lupis’ reforms have advanced is also a problem...”

More than a year had passed since the start of the reinforcement mission.

It would not be surprising if Lupis gained some successes during that time.

“Well, I don't think she will gain some satisfactory results...”

Towards Ryouma's bitter words, Elena fell silent while showing a bitter smile.

Elena herself probably thinks that the reforms have already advanced a lot.

“How much time we can get from the negotiations, it depends on his majesty Julianus. I guess...”

“We can only leave things to him for now. I've played my role long enough, and I can't leave Wortenia peninsula much longer.”

He didn't want to get involved any more.

Elena turned her gaze at Ryouma's eyes after she heard his words that indicated he didn't wish further involvement.

“I feel like you still have some leeway though?”

“Oh please, I'm at my limit here you know? In fact, I'm just barely able to keep things together. That's me being honest here...”

Saying that Ryouma showed a gentle smile.

He didn't have time to spare anymore. That alone wasn't a lie. However, that was not the complete truth either.

If it was on schedule, the initial development of Sirius City, which already became his home base, should be about to end.

After that, he needs to gradually develop the whole peninsula.

In that sense, Ryouma still have some room to spare.

However, it was for his own territory, not for another country.

Besides.....

(Even if I involve myself further, there are not many things we could do...)

That sentiment too existed inside Ryouma's heart.

He had obtained enough reputation, and the reinforcement mission this time ended honorably, furthermore his fame as a strategist should spread to the neighboring countries.

Above all, it was very satisfying for him that he had managed to open diplomatic relations with leading countries such as ErnestGora and Mist.

(Reputation, connections, and profits...)

He had nothing more to aim for...

If one were to take the discussion further, it was not like Ryouma didn't have the means to make the Zalda Kingdom achieve a real victory.

But, Ryouma just didn't want to use it.

The problem was the labor and time he needed to spend to achieve that. And it was also not a hundred percent sure he could achieve it.

After all, Ryouma was not a God that could see ahead with 100% certainty.

(Well, it would be greedy of me if I tried to get more than what I have right now anyway...)

Now that he had managed to obtain the results he had originally planned, further profits might end up hurting him instead. Because profits were something that can make other people feel envy.

From that point of view, he thought it would be better for him to end everything here...

Although personally, Ryouma favored Julianus more than Lupis.

“Well, fine then... I guess I can't burden Ryouma-kun any more than this...”

Elena sighed after she said those words.

For Elena, she wanted to keep the personnel she can use as much as possible for the war that will happen again soon.

However, for Ryouma who had a duty to finish his territory's development, she could not say anything.

(If only that child could understand politics like Ryouma-kun...)

With those thoughts, the face of a blonde young man that she had raised as her close aide. appeared inside Elena's mind.

“What's wrong?”

“Hmm? Ah, I just thought a bit about Chris...”

“Chris? Ah, Elena-san's aide, am I right?”

A bitter smile appeared on Ryouma's face.

He understood why Elena looked gloomy.

“At the time he heard about the ceasefire, he was very furious was it not?”

Elena nodded her head by way of answering Ryouma's question, while shrugging her shoulders.

“Indeed, he even flared at me.”

“Hoo... But then, I guess it was reasonable for him to get angry, no?”

A beautiful young man that looked like a woman.

Thinking about the figure of a pretty man getting angry at Elena, Ryouma could not help but laughed a little bit.

“Well, it can't be helped. I think it was normal for a field commander to be like that? Does Elena-san think differently?”

It was a fact that Ryouma's plan had aimed at the complete destruction of the enemy invading army, and a lot of effort had been put into it.

How much blood had to flow for that plan to be carried?

And, another chance of victory might not come the second time.

Yet, the Zalda Kingdom king ceased the fight without the consent of the other countries. Not to mention, at a time when the Ortomea Empire army was trapped in a cage...

As a matter of course, it was natural for Chris.

However, that was because he was a field commander.

Each position had its own opinion.

Each position had a different view at things like someone who saw the scenery from the top of the mountain compared to someone who saw it from the foot of the mountain.

“Of course...”

She was putting her expectations on Chris.

Elena wanted to make him her successor in the future.

As the elderly Elena had lost her daughter, he was someone she regarded as her son.

That was why she wanted him to find the answers by himself.

“Well, it can't be helped after all, even Chris-san has his share of bad luck. Do you understand what I'm saying?”

One of the Rozeria Kingdom General had died.

Chris who was always being overshadowed by him for a long time was hungry for some acknowledgments.

He was being impatient to achieve a good result, he cannot let himself get satisfied with some low assessments.

Combining with his beautiful face, it had become his inferiority complex.

He didn't want to be despised by the surrounding people. And he wanted the people to acknowledge him. Such thoughts were swirling inside Chris' mind.

Ryouma himself didn't think that Chris was someone who was ambitious.

After all, every person wanted to receive a valid acknowledgment from other people.

“Well... I guess so...”

Elena was well aware that she cannot compare Chris with Ryouma.

Within the knight orders, Chris was among the best, his head was not that stupid either. In terms of talents, Chris was someone who one day will be responsible for the next generation of the Rozeria Kingdom military.

However, youth come with roughness. <TLN Unpolished diamond.>

Especially when it comes to reading other people's minds, he was very naive. Also, the

lack of understanding for the politics of a country...

(Like that, I always ended up comparing Chris with the youth in front of me. It might also be the reason why Chris felt irritated all the more at me...)

However, if one were to think about the Rozeria Kingdom's fate, it could not be helped that she thought like that.

In truth, if only the young man with mediocre features that was in front of her could stay by her side...

Thinking that, Elena then sighed while looking down at her cup of tea.

Chapter 38

Back and Front

A country existed in the southwest part of the western continent.

A city-state, filled with temples built by using majestic marbles.

Despite the border with the southern kingdoms and the Kirtantia Kingdom, which was one of the major powers, becoming tense, the country had survived preserving its independence for many years.

No matter how much the borders of neighboring countries changed, there was no effect to this city-state.

Even Ortomea Empire didn't touch this country, even though by doing so they would be able to gain the southern harbor they had desired for so long.

It was as if the country was a giant sleeping monster. In fact, if that monster was awake, it would be easy for them to conquer the entire continent.

The name of that city-state was Holy city Meneztia.

It was the city of God dedicated to the light god Meneoz, and it was the home of the light god religion organization with believers across the continent.

While some might've called it a temple city, it was not like the entire town was an inviolable sanctuary.

When world war happens, even a religious community cannot protect themselves with only the authority of abstract divine existence.

The city was protected by high walls. Above all else, it had guards watching the surroundings at all times with sharp eyes.

Those guards had thick iron armors, with the tip of their spearhead shone brightly.

And the light in the eyes of those who walked around the town, was full of desires.

It was the gaze that should not belong to the servants of God.

And the soldiers were not the only ones who had such a gaze.

These people were like hungry wolves.

They were people who foolishly believed that they were people blessed by the God and that their actions were for God. <TLN: Basically a bunch of zealots... >

They shouted the name of God as a tool to satisfy their desires.

And deep inside this city, located at its center, the noblest man in town gently relaxed in the luxurious chair that was similar to a throne, playfully with a glass filled with wine while hearing reports from his subordinates.

Luxurious canonical robe with white as base color, sewn with gold threads. The gloss of the garments indicated that the clothes he wore were made of silk.

The staff decorated with jewels that were by the man's side indicated his high status.

“Hoo, Ortomea has pulled their army back?”

“Yes, Your Holiness... After the death of Greg Moore, the Notiz Fort has fallen into the enemy's control.”

“What about the casualties?”

“According to the spy report, the Ortomean side immediately proposed a ceasefire the moment they found out they were being flanked from behind, thus allowing them to escape the total annihilation of the army. However, the attacks led by Elena Steiner and Eclatia Marienel had managed to kill around 10,000 of their men.”

Hearing the report from the man kneeling in front of him, he lifted his lips and laughed.

The smile was truly like the devil's sneer.

Most people would shake in fear if they saw his facial expression.

However, the kneeling old men didn't show any expressions even though the master of the room showed such malicious laugh.

“I see... 10,000 huh... Considering Ortomea national strength, such casualties can't be said as fatal...”

“Along with Notiz Fort having fallen into the enemy's hands, the storages of supplies

had also been reduced to ashes...”

“Well, it was the correct decision for both countries to pull back...”

“Yes.”

“That Zalda King seems to be a tenacious man, huh?”

“I heard rumors that he was just someone mediocre, but I guess those rumors were wrong...”

Hearing the old man's word, the man nodded his head.

It was an evidence that the old man kneeling in front of the man was an able person.

Ceasefire when the Ortomea Army was trapped. Not only that, before the negotiations finished, they let the Ortomea Army retreat intact.

If one were to look only at that part, Julianus might be seen as someone stupid.

Since it was obvious to them that Ortomea Empire had trampled over their country, and the King had just let them return home.

For ordinary people, most will definitely demand some reparations.

However, those people wouldn't realize that there were pitfalls here. It was a trap.

In the first place, many people didn't realize that the negotiations were actually meaningless if one were to compare the two countries' economic and military strength.

There was nothing binding if it was a just verbal promise. A penalty could only happen if one were trying to breach a contract.

That was the easiest way to understand the word of 'promise'.

And the law only had its meaning if there was the force to enforce it.

The existences who punished those who broke the law. People will only follow the law if there was such a force.

If it was only the law, but there was no force to enforce it, then the law would be meaningless.

And that was the same with a peace treaty.

Certainly, those negotiations were a process based on the premise that the two sides will keep their promises.

However, what if there was an overwhelming power difference between the two?

A relationship like parent and child, teacher and student, CEO and employees, lastly big and small countries...

Each relationships was different, but the essence does not change at all.

In this case, the aggregated strength of Ortomea Empire and the Zalda Kingdom was like that between a parent and a child.

If some sort of treaty was born from the negotiations, will Zalda have enough power to force Ortomea to abide by it?

It does not mean that the strong one won't keep their promises.

If one were to ask, in the Ortomea's point of view, there was plenty of room for negotiation if they deem it necessary.

However, this case was different.

For Ortomea Empire, they didn't have any reasons to force the Zalda Kingdom into the negotiation table.

The man sitting on the throne thinking deeply while he plays with the glass in his hand.

(First of all, it will be difficult after this. And Julianus seems to have noticed... When the negotiations are over, the one with less power will get destroyed...)

Even if the Zalda managed to make Ortomea Empire promise to pay the repair money, it didn't mean they would really pay it.

Many people didn't notice that.

Because the innocents believe that promises exchanged were something that should be guarded and preserved.

“Before even the negotiations start, they let the Ortomea Army leave, huh... It's not bad at all... That decision...”

“Yes, if the Zalda makes the Ortomea Army stay throughout the negotiations, it would've taken considerable effort to prepare for everything, thus the Zalda side seems to have agreed to let them leave...”

“Do you think the King will be able to earn some sympathy from the nobles and earn their help? “

“At least, not from those who sided with the Ortomea Empire...”

Of course, it was unclear how effective it would be if a government where many of its influential nobles bow down towards the Ortomea side.

However, it was also the fact that they can use the Ortomean retreat as an achievement to convince the nobles to help.

“For the Zalda Kingdom, this development has given them a little ray of hope, I guess...”

“Yes, if they continue the war, the Zalda Kingdom defeat would become absolute. Even if the Empire army got annihilated, it is doubtful that the Ortomea Empire would stand silently. Not to mention if they tried to take Sardina down...”

“That situation is normally something the Zalda side should rejoice about but...”

If one were to take the commander-in-chief, the war will end.

However this time, doing such a thing would only hasten the arrival of the next battle.

“From the Zalda Kingdom's point of view, such a plan was not really good. Of course, they can ignore that and keep doing the siege battle, but...”

“If one of his imperial daughter who has a high position within the imperial family died, the Emperor himself might leave the domestic governance and make Zalda's conquest as a top priority.”

“Yes, with that being the case, I think the second wave would be ready within a few months. However, by then the Zalda Kingdom won't be ready. Since Ortomea was the one who proposed ceasefire, rather than being persistent in taking the chance of

victory they choose to think it over..."

"Rather than short-term victory, choose to earn time for a real victory, huh? Indeed, good decision..."

"Yes, it was not bad... However..."

"The more the Zalda King tried to survive, the longer this fight will be. And will that be in line with the people's aspirations?"

"Yes, and since the start of this war, the prices of goods within the entire continent have soared high with no sight to stop, as far as the information goes, a considerable number of high profile companies have profited from it. It is only my suspicion, but this ceasefire, those guys might be behind this..."

"Like a vulture extorting the corpses, huh..."

A sarcastic smile appeared on the man's face.

However, it was certainly matched for the person who also tried to advance their own interests in this war.

"Precisely, Your Holiness..."

For the two of them, the survival of the Zalda Kingdom was not important, but for the King of the Kingdom, it was his top priority.

After a long silence, the man opened his mouth.

"Do you have any plan?"

"There is..."

"Hou..."

"Has Your Holiness heard the name of Christoph firm that has its base in the fortress city of Epiroz?"

Responding to the old man's words, the man shook his head.

The Pope never heard the name of a small business that exists in only one part of the continent.

“So? What's with that Christoph firm?”

“They seem to have used the same method as those guys, and made a huge profit from the war...”

Hearing the words of the old man, the man's eyebrows moved.

“Are they those guys comrade?”

“It is impossible to understand which side they are on, but it seems that there is a nobleman who supports them from behind the scene...”

By listening to the old man words, the man understood which the direction the report was going.

“I see, shake that nobleman and see his reaction, huh?”

“Yes, we can monitor the trend and see if he is a member of those guys or not.”

“Will he become a good piece, I wonder?”

“Yes.”

“Good, Good... Let's go with your plan... Hahahahaha”

The man smirked and crazy laughter can be heard from inside the throne room.



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